SHAKESPEARE'S KING LEAR

HUDSON

SHAKESPEARE'S

TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR

WITH

INTRODUCTION, AND NOTES EXPLANATORY AND CRITICAL.

FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND CLASSES.

BY THE

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INTRODUCTION.

History of the Play.

THE TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR was acted at Court on the 26th of December, 1606; as appears by an entry in the Stationers' register dated November 26, 1607, and reading as follows: "A book called Mr. William Shakespeare's History of King Lear, as it was played before the King's Majesty at Whitehall, upon St. Stephen's night at Christmas last, by his Majesty's Servants playing usually at the Globe on the Bankside." This is the earliest, and indeed the only contemporary, notice of *King Lear* that has reached us. Most likely the play had become favourably known on the public stage before it was called for at the Court. On the other hand, it contains divers names and allusions evidently borrowed from Harsnet's *Declaration of Popish Impostures*, which appeared in 1603. This is all the positive information we have as to the date of the writing.

There are, however, several passages in the play itself, referring, apparently, to contemporary events, and thus indicating still more nearly the time of the composition. Of these it seems hardly worth the while to note more than one. In Act i., scene 2, Gloster says, "These late eclipses in the Sun and Moon portend no good to us: though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects." A great eclipse of the

Sun took place in October, 1605, and had been looked forward to with dread as portending evil; the more so, because an eclipse of the Moon occurred within the space of a month previous. And John Harvey had, in 1588, published a book wherein, with "the wisdom of nature," he had reasoned against the common belief, that such natural events were ominous of disaster, or had any moral significance whatever. To all which, add that in November, 1605, the dreadful secret of the Gunpowder Plot came to light, so that one at all superstitiously inclined might well say that "nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects," and that "machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves": putting all this together, we have ample ground for inferring the play to have been written when those events were fresh in the public mind. This of course brings down the date of composition at least to near the close of the year 1605.

The tragedy was printed at least twice, some editors say three times, in the year 1608, the form being in each case a small quarto. It also reappeared, along with the other plays, in the folio of 1623, where it stands the ninth in the division of Tragedies. Considerable portions of the play, as given in the quartos, are omitted in the folio; in particular one whole scene, the third in Act iv., which, though perhaps of no great account on the stage, is, in the reading, one of the sweetest and loveliest in all Shakespeare. This naturally infers the folio to have been printed from a playhouse copy in which the play had been cut down, to abridge the time of performance. — I must add that the play has several passages which were most certainly not written by Shakespeare. Two of these have considerable length, one including seventeen lines, the other fourteen; but, as these and some shorter

interpolations are pointed out in the Critical Notes, I need not dwell upon them here. By whom these were written, and why they were inserted, it were probably vain to speculate.

Sources of the Plot.

The story of King Lear and his three daughters is one of those old legends with which Mediæval Romance peopled the "dark backward and abysm of time," where fact and fancy appear all of one colour and texture. Milton, discoursing of ante-historical Britain, compares the gradual emerging of authentic history from the shadows of fable and legend, to the course of one who, "having set out on his way by night, and travelled through a region of smooth and idle dreams, arrives on the confines where daylight and truth meet him with a clear dawn, representing to his view, though at a far distance, true colours and shapes." In Shakespeare's time, the legendary tale which furnished the main plot of this drama was largely interwoven with the popular literature of Europe. It is met with in various forms and under various names. The oldest extant version of it, in connection with British history, is in Geoffrey of Monmouth, a Welsh monk of the twelfth century, who translated it from the ancient British tongue into Latin. From thence it was abridged by the Poet's favourite chronicler, Holinshed. I must restrict myself to a condensed statement of the Holinshed version.

Leir, the son of Baldud, was admitted ruler over the Britons in the year of the world 3105. He was a prince of right-noble demeanour, governing his land and subjects in great wealth. He had three daughters, named Gonorilla, Regan, and Cordilla, whom he greatly loved, but the youngest, Cordilla, far above the two elder. When he was come to great age, he

thought to understand the affections of his daughters, and to prefer her whom he best loved to the succession. Therefore he first asked Gonorilla, the eldest, how well she loved him. She, calling her gods to witness, protested that she loved him more than her own life, which by right and reason should be most dear to her. Being well pleased with this answer, he demanded of the second how well she loved him. She answered, confirming her saying with great oaths, that she loved him more than tongue could express, and far above all other creatures in the world. Then he called Cordilla before him, and asked what account she made of him. She answered as follows: "Knowing the great love and fatherly zeal which you have always borne towards me, I protest that I have loved you ever, and while I live shall love you, as my natural father; and if you would understand more of the love I bear you, assure yourself that so much as you are worth, so much I love you, and no more."

The father, being nothing content with this answer, married his two eldest, the one to the Duke of Cornwall named Henninus, the other to the Duke of Albania called Maglanus; and willed that his land should be divided betwixt them after his death, and that one-half thereof should be immediately assigned to them; but for Cordilla he reserved nothing. Yet it happened that one of the Princes of Gallia whose name was Aganippus, hearing of the beauty, womanhood, and good dispositions of Cordilla, desired her in marriage; to whom answer was made that he might have her, but could have no dower, for all was promised to her sisters. Aganippus, notwithstanding this answer, took her for wife, only moved thereto by respect for her person and amiable virtues.

After Leir was fallen into age, the Dukes that had married

his two elder daughters rose against him in arms, and reft from him the government of the land. He was put to his portion, that is, to live after a rate assigned to him, which in process of time was diminished. But his greatest grief was from the unkindness of his daughters, who seemed to think that what their father had was too much, the same being ever so little. Going from the one to the other, he was brought to such misery, that in the end he fled the land, and sailed into Gallia, to seek some comfort of Cordilla, whom before he hated. The lady, hearing he was arrived in poor estate, first sent him privily a sum of money, to apparel himself withal, and to retain a number of servants that might attend upon him. She then appointed him to come to the Court; which he did, and was so honourably and lovingly received, that his heart was greatly comforted: for he was no less honoured than if he had been king of the whole country. Aganippus also caused a mighty army to be put in readiness, and a great navy of ships to be rigged, to pass over into Britain with his father-in-law. When this army and navy were ready, Leir and his daughter, with her husband, took the sea, and, arriving in Britain, fought with their enemies, and discomfitted them in battle, Maglanus and Henninus being slain. Leir was then restored to his kingdom, which he ruled for the space of two years after this, and then died, forty years after he first began to reign.

The same story, with certain variations, is told briefly by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*, book ii., canto 10; also, at much more length, in a versified form written by John Higgins, and published in *The Mirror for Magistrates;* also in an old ballad, printed in Percy's *Reliques:* but this latter was probably subsequent to the tragedy, and partly founded upon it. It appears, also, by an entry at the Stationers',

dated May 14, 1594, that there was an older play on the same subject. Finally, a play, entitled "The True Chronicle History of King Leir and his three Daughters," was entered at the Stationers', May 8, 1605, and published. Possibly this may have been another play than that heard of in 1594, but probably it was the same. Be this as it may, the piece is a wretched thing, and cannot be supposed to have contributed any thing towards Shakespeare's tragedy, unless it may have suggested to him the theme.

Thus much as to what the Poet had before him for the main plot of *King Lear*. The subordinate plot of Gloster and his sons was doubtless partly founded upon an episodical chapter in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, entitled "The pitiful state and story of the Paphlagonian unkind King and his kind son; first related by the son, then by the blind father." Of this, also, I must give a condensed statement.

The "Princes" who figure in Sidney's work, being overtaken by a furious storm, are forced to seek shelter in a hollow rock, where, themselves unseen, they overhear a dialogue between an aged man and a young, both poorly arrayed, extremely weather-beaten; the old man blind, the young man leading him. At length, the talk became so sad and pitiful, that the princes were moved to go out to them and ask the younger what they were. He answered, "Sirs, I see well you are strangers, that know not our misery, so well known here. Indeed our state is such that, though nothing is so needful to us as pity, yet nothing is more dangerous unto us than to make ourselves so known as may stir pity. This old man, lately rightful Prince of this country of Paphlagonia, was, by the hard-hearted ungratefulness of a son of his, deprived not only of his kingdom, but of his sight, the riches which Nature grants to the poorest creatures. By this and

other unnatural dealings he hath been driven to such grief, that even now he would have had me lead him to the top of this rock, thence to cast himself headlong to death; and so would have made me, who received my life from him, to be the worker of his destruction. But, noble gentlemen, if either of you have a father, and feel what dutiful affection is engrafted in a son's heart, let me entreat you to convey this afflicted Prince to some place of rest and security."

Before they could make answer, the father began to speak. "Ah, my son," said he, "how evil an historian are you, that leave out the chief knot of all the discourse, my wickedness, my wickedness! If thou doest it to spare my ears, assure thyself thou dost mistake me. I take to witness that Sun which you see, that nothing is so welcome to me as the publishing of my shame. Therefore know you, gentlemen, that whatsoever my son hath said is true. But, besides, this also is true, that, having had in lawful marriage this son, I was carried by a bastard son of mine, first to mislike, then to hate, lastly to do my best to destroy this son. If I should tell you what ways he used, to bring me to it, I should tediously trouble you with as much poisonous hypocrisy, desperate fraud, smooth malice, hidden ambition, and smiling envy, as in any living person could be harboured. But no remembrance of naughtiness delights me but mine own; and methinks the accusing his traps might in some manner excuse my fault, which I loathe to do. The conclusion is, that I gave order to some servants of mine to lead this son out into a forest, and there to kill him.

But those thieves spared his life, letting him go to live poorly; which he did, giving himself to be a private soldier in a country near by. But, as he was ready to be greatly advanced for some noble service which he did, he heard

news of me; who suffered myself to be so governed by that unlawful and unnatural son, that, ere I was aware, I had left myself nothing but the name of a king. He, soon growing weary even of this, threw me out of my seat, and put out my eyes; and then let me go, neither imprisoning nor killing me, but rather delighting to make me feel my misery. And as he came to the crown by unjust means, so he kept it as unjustly; disarming all his own countrymen, so that no man durst show so much charity as to lend me a hand to guide my dark steps; till this son, forgetting my abominable wrongs, and neglecting the way he was in of doing himself good, came hither to do this kind office which you see him performing towards me, to my unspeakable grief. Above all, it grieves me that he should desperately adventure the loss of his life for mine, as if he would carry mud in a chest of crystal: for well I know, he that now reigneth will not let slip any advantage to make him away, whose just title may one day shake the seat of a never-secure tyranny. For this cause I craved of him to lead me to the top of this rock, meaning to free him from so serpentine a companion as I am. But he, finding what I purposed, only therein since he was born showed himself disobedient to me. And now, gentlemen, you have the true story; which I pray you publish to the world, that my mischievous proceedings may be the glory of his filial piety, the only reward now left for so great merit."

What afterwards happened to the persons of the tale need not be given here, as the Poet made no use of it. Suffice it to say that the Prince finally recovered the throne, and the brothers were reconciled, so that all came to a happy conclusion.

General Characteristics of the Play.

A good deal of irrelevant criticism has been spent upon the circumstance that in the details and costume of this play the Poet did not hold himself to the date of the forecited legend. That date was some nine hundred years before Christ; yet the play abounds in the manners, sentiments, and allusions of modern England. Malone is scandalized that Edgar in the play should speak of Nero, while the old chroniclers place Lear's reign upwards of eight hundred years before the birth of that gentleman. The painstaking Mr. Douce, also, is in dire distress at the Poet's blunder in substituting the manners of England under the Tudors for those of the ancient Britons.

Now to make these points, or such as these, any ground of impeachment, is to mistake totally the nature and design of the work. For the drama is not, nor was meant to be, in any sense of the term a history: it is a tragedy, and nothing else; and as such is as free of chronological circumscriptions as human nature itself. The historical or legendary matter, be it more or less, neither shapes nor guides the structure of the piece, but is used in entire subservience to the general ends of tragic representation. The play, therefore, does not fall within the lines of any jurisdiction for settling dates; it is amenable to no laws but those of Art, any more than if it were entirely of the Poet's own creation: its true whereabout is in the reader's mind; and the only proper question is, whether it keeps to the laws of this whereabout; in which reference it will probably stand the severest inquisitions that criticism has strength to prosecute.

This I take to be an ample vindication of the play not only from the aforesaid criticisms, but from any others of like

sort that may be urged. And it seems to me to put the whole matter upon just the right ground; leaving to the Drama all the freedom and variety that belong to the Gothic Architecture, where the only absolute law is, that the parts shall all stand in mutual intelligence: and the more the structure is diversified in form, aspect, purpose, and expression, the grander and more elevating is the harmony resulting from the combination. It is clearly in the scope and spirit of this great principle of Gothic Art that *King Lear* was conceived and worked out.

Herein, to be sure, it is like other of the Poet's dramas, only, it seems to me, more so than any of the rest. There is almost no end to the riches here drawn together: on attempting to reckon over the parts and particulars severally, one is amazed to find what varied wealth of character, passion, pathos, poetry, and high philosophy is accumulated in the work. Yet there is a place for every thing, and every thing is in its place: we find nothing but what makes good its right to be where and as it is; so that the accumulation is not more vast and varied in form and matter than it is united and harmonious in itself. I have spoken of a main and a subordinate plot in the drama; and I may add that either of these might suffice for a great tragedy by itself: yet the two plots are so woven together as to be hardly distinguishable, and not at all separable; we can scarce perceive when one goes out and the other comes in.

Accordingly, of all Shakespeare's dramas, this, on the whole, is the one which, considering both the qualities of the work and the difficulties of the subject, best illustrates the measure of his genius; — his masterpiece in that style or order of composition which he, I will not say created, but certainly carried so much higher than any one else as to

make it peculiarly his own. The work is indeed, to my mind, the highest specimen we have of what is aptly called the Gothic Drama.

The style and versification of *King Lear* do not differ from those of other plays written at or about the same period, save that here they seem attracted, as by imperceptible currents of sympathy, into a freedom and variety of movement answerable to the structure of the piece. There seems, in this case, no possible tone of mind or feeling, but that the Poet has a congenial form of imagery to body it forth, and a congenial pitch of rhythm and harmony to give it voice. Certainly, in none of his plays do we more feel the presence and power of that wonderful diction, not to say language, which he gradually wrought out and built up as the fitting and necessary organ of his thought. English literature has nothing else like it; and whatsoever else it has seems tame, stiff, and mechanical in the comparison.

Nor is there any of the Poet's dramas wherein we have in larger measure the sentiments of the individual, as these are kindled by special occasions, forthwith expanding into general truth, and so lifting the whole into the clear daylight of a comprehensive philosophy. It is by this process that the Poet so plays upon the passions as, through them, to instruct the reason: I mean, that he interests us in the persons, and then so works that personal interest as to project our thoughts onward and upward into the highest regions of contemplation.

Touching the improbability, sometimes censured, of certain incidents in this tragedy, it seems needful that somewhat be said. Improbable enough, I grant, some of the incidents are. But these nowise touch the substantial truth of the drama: the Poet merely uses them as occasions for what he

has to unfold of the inner life of Nature and Man. Besides, he did not invent them. They stood dressed in many attractive shapes before him, inviting his hand. And his use of them is amply justified in that they were matters of common and familiar tradition, and as such already domesticated in the popular mind and faith. And it is specially characteristic of Shakespeare that, however improbable may be his frame-work of incident, he nevertheless makes it alive with the soul of Nature's truth; whereas other writers will frame you up a plot of commonplace incidents, and then proceed to set at nought all the weightier matters of Nature; yet their workmanship readily passes current with the criticism that has so often faulted him in this regard.

As to the alleged improbabilities of *character*, this is another and a much graver question. The play, it must be confessed, sets forth an extreme diversity of moral complexion, but especially a boldness and lustihood in crime, such as cannot but seem unnatural if tried by the rule, or even by the exceptions, of what we are used to see of Nature. Measuring, indeed, the capabilities of man by the standard of our own observations, we shall find all the higher representations of Art, and even many well-attested things of history, too much for belief. But this is not the way to deal with such things: our business is to be taught by them as they are, and not to crush them down to the measure of what we already know.

And so we should bear in mind, that the scene of this play is laid in a period of time when the innate peculiarities of men were much less subjected than in our day to the stamp of a common impression. For the influences under which we live cannot but generate more uniformity of character; which makes us apt to regard as monstrous that rank-

ness of growth, those great crimes and great virtues which are recorded of earlier times, and which furnish the material of deep tragedy. For the process of civilization, if it does not kill out the aptitudes of rampant crime, at least involves a constant discipline of prudence that keeps them in a more decorous reserve. But suppose the pressure of such motives and restraints to be wanting, and then it will not appear so very incredible that there should be just such spontaneous outcomings of wicked impulse, just such redundant transpirations of original sin, as are here displayed. Accordingly, while we are amidst the Poet's scenes, and subject to his power, he seems to enlarge our knowledge of Nature; but when we fall back and go to comparing his shows with our experiences, he seems rather to have beguiled us with illusions than edified us with truth. But this, I suspect, is more our fault than his. And that criticism is best which is rather born of what he makes us than of what we are without him. In some respects, indeed, it may be better to speak as independent of him, but yet, on the whole, I prefer to speak as he moves me.

Goneril and Regan.

In speaking of the characters of this play I hardly know where to begin. Much has been written upon them; and the best critics have been so kindled and raised by the theme as to surpass themselves. The persons are variously divisible into groups, according as we regard their domestic or their moral affinities. I prefer to consider them as grouped upon the latter. And as the main action of the drama is shaped by the energy of evil, I will begin with those in whom that energy prevails.

There is no accounting for the conduct of Goneril and

Regan, but by supposing them possessed with a strong original impulse of malignity. The main points of their action were taken from the old story. Character, in the proper sense of the term, they have none in the legend; and the Poet invested them with characters suitable to the part they were believed to have acted.

Whatever of soul these beings possess is all in the head: they have no heart to guide or inspire their understanding, and but enough of understanding to seize occasions and frame excuses for their heartlessness. Without affection, they are also without shame; there being barely so much of human blood in their veins as may suffice for quickening the brain without sending a blush to the cheek. With a sort of hell-inspired tact, they feel their way to a fitting occasion, but drop the mask as soon as their ends are reached; caring little or nothing for appearances after their falsehood has done its work. There is a smooth, glib rhetoric in their professions of love, unwarmed with the least grace of real feeling, and a certain wiry virulence and intrepidity of mind in their after-speaking, that is fairly terrific. No touch of nature finds a response in their bosoms; no atmosphere of comfort can abide their presence: we feel that they have somewhat within that turns the milk of humanity to venom, which all the wounds they can inflict are but opportunities for casting.

The subordinate plot of the drama serves the purpose of relieving the improbability of their behaviour. Some have indeed censured this plot as an embarrassment to the main one; forgetting, perhaps, that to raise and sustain the feelings at any great height there needs some breadth of basis. A degree of evil which, if seen altogether alone, would strike us as superhuman, makes a very different impression

when it has the support of proper sympathies and associations. This effect is in a good measure secured by Edmund's independent concurrence with Goneril and Regan in wickedness. It looks as if some malignant planet had set the elements of evil a-stir in many hearts at the same time; so that "unnaturalness between the child and the parent" were become, sure enough, the order of the day.

Besides, the agreement of the sister-fiends in filial ingratitude might seem, of itself, to argue some sisterly attachment between them. So that, to bring out their characters truly, it had to be shown that the same principle which unites them against their father will, on the turning of occasion, divide them against each other. Hence the necessity of setting them forth in relations of such a kind as may breed strife between them. In Edmund, accordingly, they find a character wicked enough, and energetic enough in his wickedness, to interest their feelings; and because they are both alike taken with him, therefore they will cut their way to him through each other's life. And it is considerable that their passion for him proceeds mainly upon his treachery to his father, as though from such similarity of action they inferred a congeniality of mind. For even to have hated each other from love of any one but a villain, and because of his villainy, had seemed a degree of virtue in beings such as they are.

There is so much sameness of temper and behaviour in these two she-tigers, that we find it somewhat difficult to distinguish them as individuals; their characteristic traits being, as it were, fused and run together in the heat of a common malice. Both are actuated by an extreme ferocity; which, however, up to the time of receiving their portions, we must suppose to have been held in check by a most art-

ful and vigilant selfishness. And the malice of Goneril, the eldest, appears still to be under some restraint, from feeling that her husband is not in sympathy with her. For Albany, though rather timid and tardy in showing it, remains true to the old King; his tardiness probably springing, at least in part, from a reluctance to make a square issue with his wife, who, owing to her superiority of rank and position, had somewhat the advantage of him in their marriage. Regan, on the other hand, has in Cornwall a husband whose heart beats in perfect unison with her own against her father; and the confidence of his sympathy appears to discharge her malice entirely from the restraints of caution, and to give it a peculiar quickness and alertness of action. Near the close of the King's last interview with these dreadful creatures, we have the following: —

> *Gon.* Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance
> From those that she calls servants or from mine?
> *Reg.* Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to slack you,
> We could control them. If you will come to me,—
> For now I spy a danger,—I intreat you
> To bring but five-and-twenty: to no more
> Will I give place or notice.
> *Lear.* I gave you all,—
> *Reg.* And in good time you gave it.
> *Lear.* — Made you my guardians, my depositaries;
> But kept a reservation to be follow'd
> With such a number.

I quote this passage mainly for the purpose of noting the concentrated wolfishness of heart in those few words, "And in good time you gave it," snapped out in reply to the pathetic appeal, "I gave you all." Human speech cannot be more intensely charged with fury. And this cold, sharp venom of retort is what chiefly discriminates Regan from Goneril: otherwise they seem too much like repetitions of

each other to come fairly within the circle of Nature, who never repeats herself. Yet their very agreement in temper and spirit renders them the fitter for the work they do. For the sameness of treatment thence proceeding is all the more galling and unbearable forasmuch as it appears the result of a set purpose, a conspiracy coolly formed and unrelentingly pursued. That they should lay on their father the blame of their own ingratitude, and stick their poisoned tongues into him under pretence of doing him good, is a further refinement of malice not more natural to them than tormenting to him. It is indeed difficult to conceive how creatures could be framed more apt to drive mad any one who had set his heart on receiving any comfort or kindness from them.

Of the conduct ascribed to these ladies after the death of Cornwall, what shall I say? It is true, the Poet prepares us somewhat for their final transports of mutual fierceness, by the moralizing he puts into the mouth of Albany: —

> That nature which contemns its origin
> Cannot be border'd certain in itself;

meaning, apparently, that where the demon of filial ingratitude reigns, there the heart is ripening for the most unnatural crimes, so that there is no telling what it will do, or where it will stop. Nevertheless I hardly know how to approve an exhibition of depravity so extreme. The action of Goneril and Regan, taken all together, seems the most improbable thing in the drama. I cannot quite shake off the feeling, that before the heart could become so thoroughly petrified the brain must cease to operate. I find it not easy, indeed, to think of them otherwise than as instruments of the plot; not so much ungrateful persons as personifications of ingratitude. Yet I have to acknowledge that their blood is of much the same colour as ours.

Edmund.

For the union of wit and wickedness, Edmund stands next to Richard and Iago. His strong and nimble intellect, his manifest courage, his energy of character, and his noble person, prepare us on our first acquaintance to expect from him not only great undertakings, but great success in them. But, while his personal advantages naturally generate pride, his disgraces of fortune are such as, from pride, to generate guilt. The circumstances of our first meeting with him, the matter and manner of Gloster's talk about him and to him, go far to explain his conduct; while the subsequent outleakings of his mind in soliloquy let us into his secret springs of action. With a mixture of guilt, shame, and waggery, his father, before his face, and in the presence of one whose respect he craves, makes him and his birth a theme of gross and wanton discourse; at the same time drawing comparisons between him and "another son some year elder than this," such as could hardly fail at once to wound his pride, to stimulate his ambition, and to awaken his enmity. Thus the kindly influences of human relationship and household ties are turned to their contraries. He feels himself the victim of a disgrace for which he is not to blame; which he cannot hope to outgrow; which no degree of personal worth can efface; and from which he sees no escape but in the pomp and circumstance of worldly power. Nor is this all:

Whatever aptitudes he may have to filial virtue are thwarted by his father's open impiety towards his mother: the awe with which we naturally contemplate the mystery of our coming hither is prevented by his father's coarse levity respecting his birth and her who bore him. Thus the very beginnings of religion are stifled in him by the impossibility

of honouring his father and mother: as they have no religion towards each other, so he has none towards them. He rather despises them for being his parents; and the consciousness of being himself a living monument of their shame tends to pervert the felicities of his nature.

Then too, by his residence and education abroad, he is cut off from the fatherly counsels and kindnesses which might else compensate, in part, the disgraces entailed upon him. His shame of birth, however, nowise represses his pride of blood: on the contrary, it furnishes the conditions wherein such pride, though the natural auxiliary of many virtues, is most apt to fester into crime. . For, while his shame begets scorn of family ties, his pride passes into greediness of family possessions: the passion for hereditary honours is unrestrained by domestic attachments: no love of Edgar's person comes in to foreclose a lust for his distinctions; and he is led to envy as a rival the brother whom he would else respect as a superior.

Always thinking, too, of his dishonour, he is ever on the watch for signs that others are thinking of it; and the jealousy thence engendered construes every show of respect into an effort of courtesy; a thing that inflames his ambition while chafing his pride. The corroding suspicion, that others are perhaps secretly scorning his noble descent while outwardly acknowledging it, leads him to find or fancy in them a disposition to idemnify themselves for his personal superiority out of his social debasement. The stings of reproach, being personally unmerited, are resented as wrongs; and with the plea of injustice he can easily reconcile his mind to the most wicked schemes. Aware of Edgar's virtues, still he has no relentings; but shrugs his shoulders, and laughs off all compunctions with an "I must"; as if

justice to himself were a sufficient excuse for his criminal purposes.

With "the plague of custom" and "the curiosity of nations" Edmund has no compact: he did not consent to them, and therefore holds himself unbound by them. He came into the world in spite of them; perhaps he owes his gifts to a breach of them: may he not, then, seek to thrive by circumventing them? Since his dimensions are so well compact, his mind so generous, and his shape so true, he prefers Nature as she has made him to Nature as she has placed him; and freely employs the wit she has given, to compass the wealth she has withheld. Thus our free-love philosopher appeals from convention to Nature; and, as usually happens in such cases, takes only so much of Nature as will serve his turn. For convention itself is a part of Nature; it being no less natural that men should grow up together in families and communities than that they should grow up severally as individuals. To be somewhat more particular, the sacredness and inviolability of marriage and of the family state is a natural as well as a Divine provision for the continuance and health of the human kind; and it is an altogether spurious and diabolical gospel which would subordinate to the alleged rights of the individual that great law of our social constitution. But with Edmund the same spirit that prompts the appeal orders the tribunal. Nor does Nature, in such cases, contradict, or debate, or try conclusions with men; but just nods assent to their propositions, and lets them have their own way, as knowing that "the very devils cannot plague them better."

Nevertheless there is not in Edmund, as in Iago, any spontaneous or purposeless wickedness. Adventures in crime are not at all his pastime: they are his means, not his end;

his instruments, not his element. Nay, he does not so much make war on Duty, as bow and shift her off out of the way, that his wit may have free course. He deceives others indeed without scruple, but then he does not consider them bound to trust him, and tries to avail himself of their credulity or criminality without becoming responsible for it. True, he is a pretty bold experimenter, rather radical in his schemes, but this is because he has nothing to lose if he fails, and much to gain if he succeeds. Nor does he attempt to disguise from himself, or gloss over, or anywise palliate, his designs; but boldly confronts and stares them in the face, as though assured of sufficient external grounds to justify or excuse them.

Edmund's strength and acuteness of intellect, unsubjected as they are to the moral and religious sentiments, exempt him from the superstitions that prevail about him. He has an eye to discern the error of such things, but no sense for the deeper truth they involve. For such superstitions are the natural development of the religious instincts unenlightened by Revelation. So that he who would not be superstitious without Revelation would probably be irreligious with it; and that there is more of truth in superstition than in irreligion, is implied in the fact of religious instincts. In other words, Edmund is a free-thinker; not in the right philosophical sense of the term, but in the old historic sense; that is, one in whom the intellect owns no allegiance to the conscience. No awe of Duty, no religious fear to do or think wrong, is allowed to repress or abridge his freedom of thought. Thus it is merely the atheism of the heart that makes him so discerning of error in what he does not like; in which case the subtilties of the understanding lead to the rankest unwisdom.

The Old King.

Some of our very best criticism on Shakespeare has lately come from men skilled in the healing art, and bringing to the subject the ripe fruits of scientific study and professional experience. Probably I cannot better approach the consideration of the old King than by quoting a most instructive passage from Dr. Bucknill's essay on *The Psychology of Shakespeare*:—

"Essayists upon this drama have followed each other in giving an account of the development of Lear's character and madness, which we cannot but regard as derogatory to the one, and erroneous in relation to the other. They have described Lear as an old man, who determines upon abdication and the partition of his kingdom, while he is of sane mind, and fully capable of appreciating the nature of the act. Thence it becomes necessary to view the original character of Lear as that of a vain, weak old man; thence it becomes necessary to view the first acts of the drama as a gross improbability. Such undoubtedly they would be, if they were the acts of a sane mind; but if, on the contrary, it be accepted that the mind of the old King has, from the first, entered upon the actual domain of unsoundness, the gross improbability at once vanishes, and the whole structure of the drama is seen to be founded not more upon 'an old story rooted in the popular faith' than upon the verisimilitude of nature.

"The accepted explanation of Lear's mental history, that he is at first a man of sound mind, but of extreme vanity and feeble power of judgment; and that, under the stimulus of subsequent insanity, this weak and shallow mind develops into the fierce Titan of passion, with clear insight into the

heart of man, with large grasp of morals and polity, with terrible eloquence making known, as with the voice of inspiration, the heights and depths of human nature; that all this, under the spur of disease, should be developed from the sterile mind of a weak and vain old man, — this indeed is a gross improbability, in which we see no clew to explanation.

"Gross improbabilities of circumstance are not so rare in Shakespeare. The Weird Sisters in *Macbeth* and the Ghost in *Hamlet* are certainly not more probable as events than the partition of Lear's kingdom. But there is one kind of improbability which is not to be found in Shakespeare, — the systematic development of goodness from badness, of strength from weakness; the union of that which, either in the region of feeling or of intellect, is antagonistic and incompatible. — The consistency of Shakespeare is in no characters more close and true than in those most difficult ones wherein he portrays the development of mental unsoundness, as in Hamlet, Macbeth, and Lear: into these he throws the whole force of his genius; in these he transcends, not only all that other poets have effected before him, but all that he has ever done himself."

As a portraiture of individual character, Lear himself holds, to my mind, much the same pre-eminence over all others which I accord to the tragedy as a dramatic composition. The delineation reminds me, oftener than any other, of what some one has said of Shakespeare, — that if he had been the author of the human heart, it seems hardly possible he should have better understood what is in it, and how it was made. And here, I think, may be fitly applied to him one of his own descriptions; from his poem entitled *A Lover's Complaint:* —

> So on the tip of his subduing tongue
> All kind of arguments and question deep,
> All replication prompt, and reason strong,
> For his advantage still did wake and sleep:
> To make the weeper laugh, the laugher weep,
> He had the dialect and different skill,
> Catching all passions in his craft at will.

The Poet often so orders his delineations as to start and propel the mind backwards over a large tract of memory. As in real life, the persons, when they first come to our knowledge, bring each their several dower of good or evil inherited from their past hours. What they are now, remembers what they were long ago; and in their to-day we have the slow cumulative result of a great many yesterdays. Thus even his most ideal characters are invested with a sort of historic verisimilitude: the effects of what they thought and did long before still remain with them; and in their present speech and action is opened to us a long-drawn vista of retrospection. And this is done not in the way of narrative, but of suggestion; the antecedent history being merely implied, not related, in what is given. Sometimes he makes the persons speak and act from their *whole* character at once; that is, not only from those parts of it which are seen, but from those which lie back out of sight; from hidden causes, from motives unavowed, and even from springs and impulses of which the subject himself is not conscious. The effect of this is quite remarkable, and such as to outstrip the swiftest wing of analysis. It sends us right beyond the characters to Nature herself, and to the common elementary principles of all character; so touching the mind's receptive powers as to kindle its active and productive powers.

Lear is among the Poet's finest instances, perhaps his very finest, in this art of historical perspective. The old King

speaks out from a large fund of vanishing recollections; and in his present we have the odour and efficacy of a remote and varied past. The play forecasts and prepares, from the outset, that superb intellectual ruin where we have "matter and impertinency mix'd, reason in madness"; the earlier transpirations of the character being shaped and ordered with a view to that end. Certain presages and predispositions of insanity are manifest in his behaviour from the first, as the joint result of nature, of custom, and of superannuation. We see in him something of constitutional rashness of temper, which moreover has long been fostered by the indulgences and flatteries incident to his station, and which, through the cripplings of age, is now working loose from the restraints of his manlier judgment. He has been a wise and good man, strong in reason, in just feeling, and rectitude of purpose, but is now decidedly past his faculties; which however, as often happens, is unapparent to him save as he feels it in a growing indisposition to the cares and labours of his office. So that there is something of truth in what Goneril says of him; just enough to make her appear the more hateful in speaking of it as she does: "The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash; then must we look to receive from his age, not alone the imperfections of long-ingraffed condition, but therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them." He is indeed full of inconstant starts and petty gusts of impatience, such as are excusable only in those who have not yet reached, and those who have plainly outlived, the period of discretion and self-restraint.

These growing infirmities of nature and time are viewed by his children with very different feelings. The two elder are inwardly glad of them. They secretly exult in the de-

cays and dilapidations of his manhood as incapacitating him for his office, and so speeding their hopes of the inheritance. They know it is his disease to be gratified with such hollow and hyperbolical soothings as would else be the height of insolence. And so in the name of duty they study to inflame the waywardness that provokes their scorn. They *crave* reasons for persecuting him, and therefore will say any thing, will do any thing, to pamper the faults which at once prompt and seem to justify their contempt of him. In a word, it is their pleasure to bring oil to his fire, that he may the sooner be burnt out of their way.

With Cordelia all this is just reversed. The infirmities of a beloved and venerated father are things which she does not willingly see; when she sees, she pities them; and in a true filial spirit never thinks of them but as a motive to greater tenderness and respect. That his mind is falling out of tune, inspires her with the deeper reverence: she would rather go mad herself than see him do so. Partly from a conscious purpose, but more from an instinct of dutiful affection, she tries to assuage and postpone his distemper with the temperate speech of simple truth; duty and love alike forbidding her to stimulate his disease with the strong waters of fleering and strained hyperbole. Then too a fine moral tact seems to warn her that the medicine of reason must be administered to the dear old man in very gentle doses, else it will but feed his evil. And her treatment is well adapted to keep his faculties in tune, but that her holy purpose is baffled by the fulsome volubility of her sisters.

The first two speeches of the play inform us that the division of the kingdom has already been resolved upon, the terms of the division arranged, and the several portions allotted. This fact is significant, and goes far to interpret the

subsequent action, inasmuch as it infers the trial of professions to be but a trick of the King's, designed, perhaps, to surprise his children into expressions which filial modesty would else forbid. Lear has a morbid hungering after the outward tokens of affection: he is not content to know that the heart beats for him, but craves to feel and count over its beatings. The passion is indeed a selfish one, but it is the selfishness of a right-generous and loving nature. Such a diseased longing for sympathy is not the growth of an unsympathizing heart. And Lear naturally looks for the strongest professions where he feels the deepest attachment. "I loved her most, and thought to set my rest on her kind nursery," — such is his declared preference of Cordelia. And the same thing comes out still more forcibly when, hearing him speak of her as

> Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate,
> Dower'd with our curse, and stranger'd with our oath,

the King of France replies, —

> This is most strange,
> That she, who even but now was your best object,
> The argument of your praise, balm of your age,
> The best, the dearest, should in this trice of time
> Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle
> So many folds of favour.

And the same doting fondness that suggested the device makes Lear angry at its defeat; while its success with the first two heightens his irritation at its failure with the third. Thwarted of his hope where he has centred it most and held it surest, his weakness naturally flames out in a transport of rage. Still it is not any doubt of Cordelia's love, but a dotage of his trick that frets and chafes him. For the device is a *pet* with him. And such a bauble of strategy would

have had no place in his thoughts, had he been of a temper to bear the breaking of it. Being thus surprised into a tempest of passion, in the disorder of his mind he at once forgets the thousand little daily acts that have insensibly wrought in him to love Cordelia most, and to expect most love from her. His behaviour towards her, indeed, is like that of a peevish, fretful child who, if prevented from kissing his nurse, falls to striking her.

Men sometimes take a strange pleasure in acting without or against reason; since this has to their feelings the effect of ascertaining and augmenting their power; as if they could make a right or a truth of their own. It appears to be on some such principle as this that arbitrariness, or a making of the will its own reason, sometimes becomes a passion in men. Such a stress of self-will proceeds, I apprehend, on much the same ground as Sir Thomas Browne's faith, which delighted in making honours for itself out of impossibilities. That certain things could not be, was, he tells us, his strongest argument for believing them; that is, he felt the surer of his creed as it reversed the laws of thought, and grew by the contradictions of reason. The very shame, too, of doing wrong sometimes hurries men into a barring of themselves off from retreat. And so it appears to be with Lear in his treatment of Cordelia. In the first place, he *will* do the thing because he knows it to be wrong; and then the uneasy sense of a wrong done prompts him to bind the act with an oath; that is, because he ought not to have driven the nail, therefore he *clinches* it. This action of mind is indeed abnormal, and belongs to what may be termed the border-land of sanity and madness; nevertheless something very like it is not seldom met with in men who are supposed to be in full possession of their wits.

How deeply the old King, in this spasm of willfulness, violates the cherished order of his feelings, appears in what follows, but especially in his shrinking soreness of mind as shown when the Fool's grief at the loss of Cordelia is mentioned. The sense of having done her wrong sticks fast in his heart, and will not let him rest. And his remorse on this score renders him the more sensitive to the wrongs that are done him by others. He could better endure the malice of his other daughters, but that it reminds him how deeply he has sinned against her love who has ever approved herself his best. Hence, when Goneril is stinging her ingratitude into him, he exclaims, —

> O, most small fault,
> How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!
> Which, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature
> From the fix'd place, drew from my heart all love,
> And added to the gall.

But the great thing in the delineation of Lear is the effect and progress of his passion in redeveloping his intellect. For the character seems designed in part to illustrate the power of passion to reawaken and raise the faculties from the tomb in which age has quietly inurned them. And so in Lear we have, as it were, a handful of tumult embosomed in a sea, gradually overspreading and pervading and convulsing the entire mass.

In his conscious fulness of paternal love, Lear confides unreservedly in the piety of his children. The possibility of filial desertion seems never to have entered his thoughts; for so absolute is his trust, that he can hardly admit the evidence of sight against his cherished expectations. Bereft, as he thinks, of one, he clings the closer to the rest, assuring himself that they will spare no pains to make up the loss.

Cast off and struck on the heart by another, he flies with still greater confidence to the third. Though proofs that she too has fallen off are multiplied upon him, still he cannot give her up, cannot be provoked to curse her; he *will* not see, will not own to himself the fact of her revolt.

When, however, the truth is forced home, and he can no longer evade or shuffle off the conviction, the effect is indeed terrible. So long as his heart had something to lay hold of and cling to and rest upon, his mind was the abode of order and peace. But, now that his feelings are rendered objectless, torn from their accustomed holdings, and thrown back upon themselves, there springs up a wild chaos of the brain, a whirling tumult and anarchy of the thoughts, which, till imagination has time to work, chokes down his utterance. Then comes the inward, tugging conflict, deep as life, which gradually works up his imaginative forces, and kindles them to a preternatural resplendence. The crushing of his aged spirit brings to light its hidden depths and buried riches. Thus his terrible energy of thought and speech, as soon as imagination rallies to his aid, grows naturally from the struggle of his feelings, — a struggle that seems to wrench his whole being into dislocation, convulsing and upturning his soul from the bottom. Thence proceeds, to quote Mr. Hallam, "that splendid madness, not absurdly sudden, as in some tragedies, but in which the strings that keep his reasoning powers together give way one after the other in the frenzy of rage and grief."

In the transition of Lear's mind from its first stillness and repose to its subsequent tempest and storm; in the hurried revulsions and alternations of feeling, — the fast-rooted faith in filial virtue, the keen sensibility to filial ingratitude, the mighty hunger of the heart, thrice repelled, yet ever strength-

ened by repulse; and in the turning-up of sentiments and faculties deeply imbedded beneath the incrustations of time and place; — in all this we have a retrospect of the aged sufferer's whole life; the abridged history of a mind that has passed through many successive stages, each putting off the form, yet retaining and perfecting the grace of the preceding.

Lear's Madness.

As to the picture here given of madness, it is such that I scarce dare undertake to speak of it in any words of my own. And probably the best I can do is by saying, what is indeed true, that men of the solidest science are accustomed to hold it as an authority in questions of that kind, consulting it and quoting it, as they would the history of an actual case. Nor am I aware of its having ever been faulted as untrue to nature in a single point. Of course there can be nothing stronger or more decisive than this as to the merit of the workmanship: the praise implied is almost too great to be inherited by a man. That the Poet should have entered so perfectly into the consciousness of insanity as thus to project, not a mere likeness of the thing, but the very thing itself, is perhaps the greatest mystery of his genius. No philosophy has yet explained or begun to explain the secret of it. To be sure, the same holds true of his other representations of madness. But this of Lear is in some respects the most wonderful of them all: for it is the resurgence of a decayed intellect, with the faculties wrenched into unhingement, and thrown into exorbitancy, by the fearful violence that has evoked them from their repose.

I must add somewhat touching the methods used for recovering the old King. — Cordelia asks the Physician, "What

can man's wisdom in the restoring his bereavèd sense?" and he replies, —

> There is means, madam:
> Our foster-nurse of nature is repose,
> The which he lacks; that to provoke in him
> Are many simples operative, whose power
> Will close the eye of anguish.

"This reply," says Dr. Kellogg, "is significant, and worthy of careful attention, as embracing a brief summary of almost the only true principles recognized by modern science, and now carried out by the most eminent physicians in the treatment of the insane." So, again, in the directions for preventing a relapse: —

> Be comforted, good madam: the great rage,
> You see, is cured in him; and yet 'tis danger
> To make him even o'er the time he has lost.
> Desire him to go in: trouble him no more
> Till further settling.

The late Dr. Brigham, a high authority in such matters, remarks that, "although near two centuries and a half have passed since Shakespeare wrote this, we have very little to add to his method of treating the insane as thus pointed out. To produce sleep, to quiet the mind by medical and moral treatment, to avoid all unkindness, and, when the patients begin to convalesce, to guard, as he directs, against every thing likely to disturb their minds and cause a relapse, is now considered the best and nearly the only essential treatment."

Thus it appears that in this most difficult field of inquiry Shakespeare anticipated the ripest conclusions of scientific study and experience: which is the more remarkable inasmuch as the learned intellect of his age was still prepossessed with a mass of superstitious trumpery concerning

magic, witchcraft, and demonology; and in the true spirit of that old system of thought insanity in all its forms was held to proceed from Satanic possession: charms, talismans, and exorcisms were the most approved remedies; while any thing like a rational and scientific treatment of the disease was commonly regarded as atheistic and profane. To question the doctrine of supernatural agency in the business, was little better than flat heresy. The whole matter was thus invested with religious terrorism and mystical predominance; the current and traditionary ideas being sanctioned by the Church, inculcated by the Clergy, and moulded into the very substance of the popular faith; the learned and the vulgar alike sharing in the old patrimony of delusion which taught that the world was full of malignant demons, whose pastime it was to *inspire* people with madness, and who were to be controlled by magic rites and muttered invocations. Even the best philosophy of the time was unable to shake off that ancient spell; Bacon himself being to the last an avowed disciple of the popular creed. So it was too with the best medical science of the time; Sir Theodore Mayence, who was physician to Queen Elizabeth and King James, expressly adhering to the received doctrine touching both the cause and the cure of mental disease.

If it be asked how Shakespeare, while the human mind all about him was thus enthralled to superstitious illusions and unrealities, came to work so near the soul of Nature and see things as they are, I can only point to the record, and leave the matter unexplained. But indeed this is only one of many proofs that, through some original and inherent virtue, his genius dwelt at "Nature's inner shrine, where she works most when we perceive her least." And perhaps he grew to a living fellowship with the true springs of intellectual light

all the better for his little acquaintance with what had been delivered in books. His mind was evidently at home with the works of Nature and the words of Scripture, whose deeper meanings seem to have been the clearer to him, that his vision was undimmed with scholastic and theological mists.

Much ingenuity has been spent in trying to argue his works away from him, on the ground that a mind so little imbued with learning, as his is acknowledged to have been, could not possibly be so deep and clear in the truth of things. I notice the point now, merely to remark that no amount of imported assistance would really do any thing towards explaining such an intellectual phenomenon. For the very character of his works stands in an original, first-hand knowledge, such as could only come by talking with Nature face to face; and such native powers as he must have had, in order to do what he did, would have been rather encumbered and obscured than otherwise, by "all the learnings that his time could make him the receiver of." Had he been more addicted to looking at Nature through "the spectacles of books," or through other men's eyes, he would probably have seen less of her inward meaning, and been less happy and less idiomatic in his translation of it. Ben Jonson magnificently apostrophizes him as "Soul of the Age": and the supremacy of his genius lies in nothing else so much as in this, that he was indeed the soul of that age, with his forces working free and clear from "the recollected terms" and musty obstructions of a former age.

It is true that, like other builders of the highest order, he "builded better than he knew"; but this was because he followed the motions of an inward, living law, and not the set rules of a dead or expiring letter. Intellectual modesty

in the highest degree, without a particle of imitative timidity, is the proper style of his workmanship. And as the spirit of a new era was to have its largest and clearest expression through him, so it behoved that his mind should take its growth apart from the influences of a superannuated erudition. If, for instance, his thoughts had been steeped in the current teachings on this very subject of madness, is it likely that he would have gone so far beyond his time in the real science of the thing? The armour that helped the knights of the Middle Ages would only oppress and hinder the modern warrior. And so the best help that Shakespeare could have in his intellectual walk was the being left to walk unhelped by any thing but the mental electricity with which his native atmosphere of thought was so highly charged.

Cordelia.

In the trial of professions, there appears something of obstinacy and sullenness in Cordelia's answer, as if she would resent the old man's credulity to her sisters' lies by refusing to tell him the truth. But, in the first place, she is considerately careful and tender of him; and it is a part of her religion not to feed his dotage with the intoxications for which he has such a morbid craving. She understands thoroughly both his fretful waywardness and their artful hypocrisy; and when she sees how he drinks in the sweetened poison of their speech, she calmly resolves to hazard the worst, rather than wrong her own truth to cosset his disease. Thus her answer proceeds, in part, from a deliberate purpose of love, not to compete with them in the utterance of pleasing falsehoods.

In the second place, it is against the original grain of her nature to talk much about what she feels, and what she in-

tends. Where her feelings are deepest, there her tongue is stillest. She "cannot heave her heart into her mouth," for the simple reason that she has so much of it. And there is a virgin delicacy in genuine and deep feeling, that causes it to keep in the back-ground of the life; to be heard rather in its effects than in direct and open declarations. They love but little who can tell how much they love, or who are fond of prating about it. To be staling itself with verbal protestations seems a kind of sacrilege and profanation. Thus love is apt to be tongue-tied; and its best eloquence is when it disables speech, and when, from very shame of being seen, it just blushes itself into sight. — Such is the beautiful instinct of true feeling to embody itself sweetly and silently in deeds, lest from showing itself in words it should turn to matter of pride and conceit. For a sentimental coxcombry is the natural issue of a cold and hollow heart.

It is not strange, therefore, that Cordelia should make it her part to "love and be silent." Yet she is in no sort a pulpy structure, or one whom it is prudent to trifle with, where her forces are unrestrained by awe of duty: she has indeed a delectable smack of her father's quality; as appears in that glorious flash of womanhood, when she so promptly switches off her higgling suitor: —

> Peace be with Burgundy!
> Since that respects of fortune are his love,
> I shall not be his wife.

Mrs. Jameson rightly says of Cordelia that "every thing in her lies beyond our view, and affects us in such a manner that we rather feel than perceive it." And it is very remarkable that, though but little seen and heard, she is nevertheless a sort of ubiquity in the play. All that she utters is but about a hundred lines; yet I had read the play occasion-

ally for several years before I could fully realize but that she was among the principal speakers; and even to this day I carry to the reading a vague impression that her speech and presence are to fill a large part of the scene.

It is in this remoteness, I take it, this gift of presence without appearance, that the secret of her power mainly consists. Her character has no foreground; nothing outstanding, or that touches us in a definable way: she is all perspective, self-withdrawn; so that she comes to us rather by inspiration than by vision. Even when she is before us we rather feel than see her; so much more being meant than meets the eye, that we almost lose the sense of what is shown, in the interest of what is suggested. Thus she affects us through finer and deeper susceptibilities than consciousness can grasp; as if she at once both used and developed in us higher organs of communication than the senses; or as if her presence acted in some mysterious way directly on our life, so as to be most operative within us when we are least aware of it. The effect is like that of a voice or a song kindling and swelling the thoughts that prevent our listening to it. In like sort, my hearing has often been so haunted with certain strains of music as to turn every stray sound into an image thereof; so that

> The music in my heart I bore
> Long after it was heard no more.

The point is well illustrated in the case of the Gentleman whom Kent despatches to Cordelia with letters informing her of what has befallen her father. After watching her movements while reading the letters, and though she utters nothing in his presence but sighs and tears, the Gentleman returns mad with eloquence and poetry; as if Heaven had been opened upon him through her, and he

Had gazed and gazed, but little thought
What wealth to him the show had brought.

What I have said of Cordelia's affection holds true of her character generally. For she has the same deep, quiet reserve of thought as of feeling; so that her mind becomes conspicuous by its retiringness, and draws the attention by shrinking from it. Though she nowhere says any thing indicating much intelligence, yet she always strikes us, somehow, as being very intelligent; and even the more so, that her intelligence makes no special report of itself. It is as if she knew too much to show her knowledge. For the strongest intellects are by no means the most demonstrative; often they are the least so. And indeed what Cordelia knows is so bound up with her affections, that she cannot draw it off into expression by itself: it is held in perfect solution, so to speak, with the other elements of her nature, and nowhere falls down in a sediment, so as to be producible in a separate state. She has a deeper and truer knowledge of her sisters than any one else about them; but she knows them by heart rather than by head; and so can *feel* and *act*, but not *articulate*, a prophecy of what they will do. Ask her, indeed, what she thinks on any subject, and her answer will be that she thinks, — nay, she cannot *tell*, she can only show you what she thinks. For her thinking involuntarily shapes itself into life, not into speech; and she uses the proper language of her mind when, bending over her "child-changed father," she invokes restoration to "hang his medicine on her lips"; or when, kneeling before him, she entreats him to "hold his hands in benediction o'er her." Here, again, "her mouth is much too narrow for her heart"; — it is indeed a small heart that the mouth is not too narrow for: — she remembers with inexpressible sorrow the curse he had pro-

nounced upon her, — for a father's curse is a dreadful thing to a soul such as hers; — and her first concern is to have that curse replaced with a benediction.

All which shows a peculiar fitness in Cordelia for the part she was designed to act; which was to exemplify the workings of filial piety, as Lear exemplifies those of paternal love. To embody this sentiment, the whole character in all its movements and aspects is made essentially religious. For filial piety is religion acting under the sacredest of human relations. And religion, we know, or ought to know, is a life, and not a language; and life is the simultaneous and concurrent action of *all* the elements of our being. Which is perfectly illustrated in Cordelia; who, be it observed, never thinks of her piety at all, because her piety keeps her thoughts engaged upon her father. And so she reveals her good thoughts by veiling them in good deeds, as the spirit is veiled and revealed in the body; nay, has to be so veiled in order to be revealed; for, if the veil be torn off, the spirit is no longer there, but hides itself at once in immateriality.

Therefore it is that Cordelia affects us so deeply and so constantly without our being able to perceive how or why. And she affects those about her in the same insensible way; that is, she keeps their thoughts and feelings busy, by keeping her own hidden beneath what she does: an influence goes forth from her by stealth, and stealthily creeps into them; an influence which does not appear, and yet is irresistible, and irresistible even because it does not appear; and which becomes an undercurrent in their minds, circulates in their blood, as it were, and enriches their life with a beauty that seems their own, and yet is not their own: so that she steals upon us through them; and we think of her the more because they, without suspecting it, remind us of her.

> Powers there are,
> That touch each other to the quick in modes
> Which the gross world no sense hath to perceive,
> No soul to dream of.

No one can see Cordelia, and be the same he was before, though unconscious the while of taking any thing from her. It is as if she secretly deposited about his person some mysterious, divine aroma which, when he is remote from her and not thinking of her, keeps giving out its perfume, and testifying, though he knows it not, that he has been with her.

Accordingly her father loves her most, yet knows not why; has no conscious reasons for the preference, and therefore cannot reason it away. Having cast her off from his bounty, but not out of his heart, he grows full of unrest, as if there were some secret power about her, like magic, which he cannot live without, though he did not dream of its existence when she was with him. And "since her going into France the Fool has much pined away"; as though her presence were necessary to his health: so that he sickens upon the loss of her, yet suspects not wherefore, and knows but that she was by and his spirits were nimble, she is gone and his spirits are drooping.

Such is the proper influence of a right-minded and right-mannered woman on those about her: she knows it not, they know it not; her influence is all the better and stronger that neither of them knows it: she begins to lose it directly she goes about to use it and make them sensible of it: with noiseless step it glides into them unnoticed and unsuspected, but disturbs and repels them as soon as it seeks to make itself heard. For indeed her power lies not in what she values herself upon, and voluntarily brings forward, and makes

use of, but in something far deeper and diviner than all this, which she knows not of and cannot help.

Finally, I know of nothing with which to compare Cordelia, nothing to illustrate her character by. An impersonation of the holiness of womanhood, herself alone is her own parallel; and all the objects that lend beauty when used to illustrate other things seem dumb or ineloquent of meaning beside her. Superior, perhaps, to all the rest of Shakespeare's women in beauty of character, she is nevertheless second to none of them as a living and breathing reality. We see her only in the relation of daughter, and hardly *see* her even there; yet we know what she is or would be in every relation of life, just as well as if we had seen her in them all. "Formed for all sympathies, moved by all tenderness, prompt for all duty, prepared for all suffering," we seem almost to hear her sighs and feel her breath as she hangs, like a ministering spirit, over her reviving father: the vision sinks sweetly and quietly into the heart, and, in its reality to our feelings, abides with us more as a remembrance than an imagination, instructing and inspiring us as that of a friend whom we had known and loved in our youth.

After all, I am not sure but it were better to have emphasized her character with the single remark of Schlegel: "Of Cordelia's heavenly beauty of soul I do not dare to speak."

It is an interesting feature of this representation, that Lear's faith in filial piety is justified by the event, though not his judgment as to the persons in whom it was to be found. Wiser in heart than in understanding, he mistook the object, but was right in the feeling. In his pride of sovereignty he thought to command the affection of his children, and to purchase the dues of gratitude by his bounty to them; but he is at last indebted to the unbought

grace of Nature for that comfort which he would fain owe to himself; what he seeks, and even more than he seeks, coming as the free return of a love that thrives in spite of him, and which no harshness or injustice of his could extinguish. Thus the confirmation of his faith grows by the ruin of his pride. Such is the frequent lesson of human life. For the Fall has not more defaced the beauty of human character than it has marred our perception of what remains: and not the least punishment of our own vices is, that they take from us the power to discern the virtue of others. In passing from this part of the subject, need I add how, with what healing discipline, and what accessions of moral strength, we are here brought to converse with

> Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight;
> And miserable love, that is not pain
> To hear of, for the glory that redounds
> Therefrom to human kind, and what we are?

All this is indeed putting the great forces of tragic representation to their rightful service.

The Fool.

There is a strange assemblage of qualities in the Fool, and a strange effect arising from their union and position, which I am not a little at a loss how to describe. It seems hardly possible that Lear's character should be properly developed without him: indeed he serves as a common gauge and exponent of all the characters about him, — the mirror in which their finest and deepest lineaments are reflected. Though a privileged person, with the largest opportunity of seeing and the largest liberty of speaking, he everywhere turns his privileges into charities, making the immunities of the clown subservient to the noblest sympathies of the man.

He is therefore by no means a mere harlequinian appendage of the scene, but moves in vital intercourse with the character and passion of the drama. He makes his folly the vehicle of truths which the King will bear in no other shape, while his affectionate tenderness sanctifies all his nonsense. His being heralded by the announcement of his pining away at the banishment of Cordelia sends a consecration before him: that his spirit feeds on her presence hallows every thing about him. Lear manifestly loves him, partly for his own sake, and partly for hers: for we feel a delicate, scarce-discernible play of sympathy between them on Cordelia's account; the more so perhaps, that neither of them makes any explicit allusion to her; their very reserve concerning her indicating that their hearts are too full to speak.

I know not, therefore, how I can better describe the Fool than as the soul of pathos in a sort of comic masquerade; one in whom fun and frolic are sublimed and idealized into tragic beauty; with the garments of mourning showing through and softened by the lawn of playfulness. His "labouring to outjest Lear's heart-struck injuries" tells us that his wits are set a-dancing by grief; that his jests bubble up from the depths of a heart struggling with pity and sorrow, as foam enwreaths the face of deeply-troubled waters. So have I seen the lip quiver and the cheek dimple into a smile, to relieve the eye of a burden it was reeling under, yet ashamed to let fall. There is all along a shrinking, velvet-footed delicacy of step in the Fool's antics, as if awed by the holiness of the ground; and he seems bringing diversion to the thoughts, that he may the better steal a sense of woe into the heart. And I am not clear whether the inspired antics that sparkle from the surface of his mind are in more impressive contrast with the dark tragic scenes into which

they are thrown, like rockets into a midnight tempest, or with the undercurrent of deep tragic thoughtfulness out of which they falteringly issue and play.

Our estimate of this drama as a whole depends very much on the view we take of the Fool; that is, on how we interpret his part, or in what sense we understand it. Superficially considered, his presence and action can hardly seem other than a blemish in the work, and a hindrance to its proper interest. Accordingly he has been greatly misunderstood, indeed totally misconstrued by many of the Poet's critics. And it must be confessed that the true meaning of his part is somewhat difficult to seize; in fact, is not to be seized at all, unless one get just the right point of view. He has no sufferings of his own to move us, yet, rightly seen, he does move us, and deeply too. But the process of his interest is very peculiar and recondite. The most noteworthy point in him, and the real key to his character, lies in that while his heart is slowly breaking he never speaks, nor even appears so much as to think of his own suffering. He seems indeed quite unconscious of it. His anguish is purely the anguish of sympathy; a sympathy so deep and intense as to induce absolute forgetfulness of self; all his capacities of feeling being perfectly engrossed with the sufferings of those whom he loves. He withdraws from the scene with the words, "And I'll go to bed at noon"; which means simply that the dear fellow is dying, and this too, purely of others' sorrows, which he feels more keenly than they do themselves. She who was the light of his eyes is gone, dowered with her father's curse and strangered with his oath; Kent and Edgar have vanished from his recognition, he knows not whither, the victims of wrong and crime; the wicked seem to be having all things their own

way; the elements have joined their persecutions to the cruelties of men; there is no pity in the Heavens, no help from the Earth; he sees nothing but a "world's convention of agonies" before him; and his straining of mind to play assuagement upon others' woes has fairly breached the citadel of his life. But the deepest grief of all has now overtaken him; his old master's wits are all shattered in pieces: to prevent this, he has all along been toiling his forces to the utmost; and, now that it has come in spite of him, he no longer has any thing to live for: yet he must still mask his passion in a characteristic disguise, and breathe out his life in a play of thought. I know not whether it may be rightly said of this hero in motley, that he

> hopes, till Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates.

Need it be said that such ideas of human character could grow only where the light of Christianity shines? The Poet's conceptions of virtue and goodness, as worked out in this drama, are thoroughly of the Christian type, — steeped indeed in the efficacy of the Christian Ideal. The old Roman conception of human goodness, as is well known, placed it courage, patriotism, honesty, and justice, — very high and noble indeed; whereas the proper constituents of the Christian Ideal are, besides these, and higher than these, mercy, philanthropy, self-sacrifice, forgiveness of injuries, and loving of enemies. It is in this sense that Shakespeare gives us the best expressions of the Christian Ideal that are to be met with in Poetry and Art. I am really unable to say what divines may have interpreted more truly or more inspiringly the moral sense, the *ethos* of our religion.

Kent and Edgar.

If the best grace and happiness of life consist, as this play makes us feel that they do, in a forgetting of self and a living for others, Kent and Edgar are those of Shakespeare's men whom one should most wish to resemble. Strikingly similar in virtues and situation, these two persons are notwithstanding widely different in character. Brothers in magnanimity and in misfortune; equally invincible in fidelity, the one to his King, the other to his father; both driven to disguise themselves, and in their disguise both serving where they stand condemned; Kent, too generous to control himself, is always quick, fiery, and impetuous; Edgar, controlling himself even because of his generosity, is always calm, collected, and deliberate. For, if Edgar be the more judicious and prudent, Kent is the more unselfish of the two: the former disguising himself for his own safety, and then turning his disguise into an opportunity of service; the latter disguising himself merely *in order* to serve, and then perilling his life in the same course whereby the other seeks to preserve it. Nor is Edgar so lost to himself and absorbed in others but that he can and does survive them; whereas Kent's life is so bound up with others, that their death plucks him after. Nevertheless it is hard saying whether one would rather be the subject or the author of Edgar's tale: —

> Whilst I was big in clamour, came there a man
> Who, having seen me in my worst estate,
> Shunn'd my abhorr'd society; but then, finding
> Who 'twas that so endured, with his strong arms
> He fasten'd on my neck, and bellow'd out
> As he'd burst heaven; threw him on my father;
> Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him
> That ever ear received; which in recounting,

His grief grew puissant, and the strings of life
Began to crack: twice then the trumpet sounded,
And there I left him tranced.
Albany. But who was this?
Edgar. Kent, sir, the banish'd Kent; who in disguise
Follow'd his enemy King, and did him service
Improper for a slave.

It is rather curious to note how the characteristic traits of these two men are preserved even when they are acting most out of character: so that, to us who are in the secret of their course, they are themselves and not themselves at the same time. For example, in Kent's obstreperous railing at the Steward, and his saucy bluntness to Cornwall and Regan, we have a strong relish of the same impulsive and outspoken boldness with which he beards the old King when the latter is storming out his paroxysm against Cordelia, and meets his threats by daring him to the worst: "Do; kill thy physician, and the fee bestow upon the foul disease." Of course, in those transports of abusive speech and of reckless retort, he is but affecting the slang-whanger as a part of his disguise: moreover he wants to raise a muss, and embroil Lear with his two daughters, and thereby draw the latter into a speedy disclosure of what he knows to be in their hearts; because his big manly soul is still on fire at the wrong Lear has done to Cordelia, and he would fain hasten that repentance which he knows must sooner or later come: still it is plain enough to us that his tumultuous conduct is but an exaggerated outcome of his native disposition; or, in other words, that he is truly himself all the while, only a good deal more so; a hiding of his character in a sort of overdone caricature. So too the imitative limberness and versatility which carry Edgar smoothly through so many abrupt shiftings of his masquerade are in perfect

keeping with the cool considerateness which enables him to hold himself so firmly in hand when he goes to assume the style of a wandering Bedlamite. He acts several widely different parts, but the same conscious self-mastery and the same high-souled rectitude of purpose, which form the backbone of his character, are apparent in them all.

In Kent and Oswald we have one of those effective contrasts with which the Poet often deepens the harmony of his greater efforts. As the former is the soul of goodness clothed in the assembled nobilities of manhood; so the latter is the very extract and embodiment of meanness; two men than whom "no contraries hold more antipathy." To call the Steward wicked were a waste of language: he is absolutely beneath the sense of that term; one of those convenient pack-horses whereon guilt often rides to its ends. Except the task of smoothing the way for the passions of a wicked mistress, no employment were base enough for him. None but a reptile like him could ever have got hatched into notice in such an atmosphere as Goneril's society: were he any thing else, there could not be sympathy enough between them to admit the relation of superior and subaltern.

General Remarks.

This play has many scenes and passages well worth our special noting. I must content myself with glancing at two or three.

The scene of Edgar and the eyeless Gloster, where the latter imagines himself ascending the chalky cliff at Dover, and leaping from it, is a notable instance of the Poet's power to overcome the inherent incredibility of a thing by his opulence of description. Great as is the miracle of Gloster's belief, it is in some sort authenticated to our feel-

ings by the array of vivid and truthful imagery which induces it. Thus does the Poet, as occasion requires, enhance the beauty of his representation, so as to atone for its want of verisimilitude.

Some of Lear's speeches amid the tempest contain, I think, the grandest exhibition of creative power to be met with. They seem spun out of the very nerves and sinews of the storm. It is the instinct of strong passion to lay hold of whatever objects and occurrences lie nearest at hand, and twist itself a language out of them, incorporating itself with their substance, and reproducing them charged with its own life. To Lear, accordingly, and to us in his presence, the storm becomes all expressive of filial ingratitude; seems spitting its fire, and spouting its water, and hurling its blasts at his old white head. Thus the terrific energies and convulsions of external nature take all their meaning from his mind; and we think of them only as the glad agents or instruments of his daughters' malice, leagued in sympathy with them, and taking their part in the controversy. In this power of imagination thus seizing and crushing the embattled elements into its service, there is a sublimity almost too vast for the thoughts. Observe, too, how the thread of association between moral and material nature conducts Lear to the strain of half-insane, half-inspired moralizing, which he closes with the pathetic exception of himself from the list of those to whom the tempest speaks as a preacher of repentance and "judgment to come."

The surpassing power of this drama is most felt in the third and fourth Acts, especially those parts where Lear appears. The fierce warring of the elements around the old King, as if mad with enmity against him, while he seeks shelter in their strife from the tempest within him; his pre-

ternatural illumination of mind when tottering on the verge of insanity; his gradual settling into that unnatural calmness which is more appalling than any agitation, because it marks the pause between order gone and anarchy about to begin; the scattering out of the mind's jewels in the mad revel of his unbound and dishevelled faculties, till he finally sinks, broken-hearted and broken-witted, into the sleep of utter prostration; — all this joined to the incessant groanings and howlings of the storm; the wild, inspired babblings of the Fool; the desperate fidelity of Kent, outstripping the malice of the elements with his ministries of love; the bedlamitish jargon of Edgar, whose feigned madness, striking in with Lear's real madness, takes away just enough of its horror, and borrows just enough of its dignity, to keep either from becoming insupportable; — the whole at last dying away into the soft, sweet, solemn discourse of Cordelia, as though the storm had faltered into music at her coming; and winding up with the revival of Lear, his faculties touched into order and peace by the voice of filial sympathy: — in all this we have indeed a masterpiece of art, of which every reader's feelings must confess the power, though perhaps no analysis can ever fathom the secret.

In conclusion, I must refer briefly to the *improvement* which this mighty drama has suffered at the hands of one Nahum Tate; an improvement inflicted for the purpose, as would seem, of dwarfing and dementing the play down to the capacity of some theatrical showman A part of Tate's work lay in rectifying the catastrophe, so as to have Lear and Cordelia come off triumphant, thus rewarding their virtue with worldly success. The cutting-out of the precious Fool, and the turning of Cordelia into a love-sick hypocrite, who feigns indifference to her father, in order to cheat and enrage

him, and thus make him abandon her to a forbidden match with Edgar, completes this execrable piece of profanation. Tate improve *King Lear!* Set a tinker at work, rather to improve Niagara!

Charles Lamb has a strain of criticism on *King Lear*, so rich and just in thought, and so happily expressed, that it probably ought always to go with the play, and at all events may fitly close this review. It is from his essay "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, considered with reference to their fitness for stage-representation": —

"To see Lear acted, — to see an old man tottering about the stage with a walking-stick, turned out of doors by his daughters in a rainy night, has nothing in it but what is painful and disgusting. We want to take him into shelter, and relieve him. That is all the feeling which the acting of Lear ever produced in me. But the Lear of Shakespeare cannot be acted. The contemptible machinery by which they mimic the storm which he goes out in is not more inadequate to represent the horrors of the real elements, than any actor can be to represent Lear: they might more easily propose to personate the Satan of Milton upon a stage, or one of Michael Angelo's terrible figures. The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual: the explosions of his passion are terrible as a volcano: they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom that sea, his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare. This case of flesh and blood seems too insignificant to be thought on; even as he himself neglects it.

"On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage: while we read it, we see not Lear, but we are Lear, — we are in his mind, we are

sustained by a grandeur which baffles the malice of daughters and storms: in the aberrations of his reason we discover a mighty, irregular power of reasoning, immethodized from the ordinary purposes of life, but exerting its powers, as the wind blows where it listeth, at will upon the corruptions and abuses of mankind. What have looks, or tones, to do with that sublime identification of his age with that of the *heavens themselves*, when, in his reproaches to them for conniving at the injustice of his children, he reminds that 'they themselves are old'? What gesture shall we appropriate to this? What has the voice or the eye to do with such things?

"But the play is beyond all art, as the tamperings with it show: it is too hard and stony; it must have love-scenes, and a happy ending. It is not enough that Cordelia is a daughter; she must shine as a lover too. Tate has put his hook in the nostrils of this Leviathan, for Garrick and his fellows, the showmen of the scene, to draw the mighty beast about more easily. A happy ending! — as if the living martyrdom that Lear had gone through, — the flaying of his feelings alive, did not make a fair dismissal from the stage of life the only decorous thing for him. If he is to live and be happy after, if he could sustain this world's burden after, why all this pudder and preparation, — why torment us with all this unnecessary sympathy? As if the childish pleasure of getting his gilt robes and sceptre again could tempt him to act over again his misused station, — as if, at his years and with his experience, any thing was left but to die."

THE TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

LEAR, King of Britain.
KING OF FRANCE.
DUKE OF BURGUNDY.
DUKE OF ALBANY.
DUKE OF CORNWALL.
EARL OF KENT.
EARL OF GLOSTER.
EDGAR, Son to Gloster.
EDMUND, Bastard Son to Gloster.
CURAN, a Courtier.
An old Man, Tenant to Gloster.
A Doctor.
A Fool.
OSWALD, Steward to Goneril.
An Officer employed by Edmund.
A Gentleman, attendant on Cordelia.
A Herald.
Servants to Cornwall.

GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA, } Daughters to Lear.

Knights attending on the King, Officers, Messengers, Soldiers, and Attendants. SCENE, *Britain*.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *A Room of State in* LEAR'S *Palace.*

Enter KENT, GLOSTER, *and* EDMUND.

Kent. I thought the King had more affected[1] the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

Glos. It did always seem so to us: but now, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the Dukes he values most; for equalities are so weigh'd, that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety.[2]

[1] To *affect* a thing is to be *inclined* to it, to have an *affection* for it.

[2] *Moiety* properly means *half*, but was used for any part or portion. So Hotspur calls his *third* of the kingdom a *moiety*. — *Curiosity* is *scrupulous*

Kent. Is not this your son, my lord?

Glos. His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge: I have so often blush'd to acknowledge him, that now I am brazed to't. Do you smell a fault?

Kent. I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper.[3]

Glos. But I have, sir, a son by order of law, some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer in my account. — Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?

Edm. No, my lord.

Glos. My Lord of Kent: remember him hereafter as my honourable friend.

Edm. My services to your lordship.

Kent. I must love you, and sue to know you better.

Edm. Sir, I shall study deserving.

Glos. He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again.[4] — [*Sennet within.*] The King is coming.

exactness. — *Equalities* means the *equality of the portions.* — This speech goes far to interpret Lear's subsequent action, as it shows that the division of the kingdom has already been concluded, and the several portions allotted, and so infers the trial of professions to be a sort of pet device with the old King, a thing that has no purpose but to gratify a childish whim. The opening thus forecasts Lear's madness.

[3] Here, as usual in Shakespeare, *proper* is *handsome* or *fine-looking*.

[4] As Edmund's villainy is a leading force in the dramatic action, an intimation of the causes which have been at work preparing him for crime is judiciously given here in the outset of the play. From his father's loose way of speaking about him and to him we naturally gather that certain malign influences have all along been perverting his character and poisoning his springs of action. — Gloster's meaning in this last speech clearly is, that he has kept Edmund *away from home* nine years, and intends sending him away again, in order to avoid the shame of his presence, or because he has "so often blush'd to acknowledge him." We may suppose Edmund's absence to have been spent in travelling abroad, or in pursuing his studies, or in some kind of foreign service. And this accounts for his not being acquainted with Kent.

Enter LEAR, ALBANY, CORNWALL, GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA, *and* Attendants.

Lear. Attend the Lords of France and Burgundy, Gloster.

Glos. I shall,[5] my liege. [*Exeunt* GLOSTER *and* EDMUND.

Lear. Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.[6] —
Give me the map there. — Know that we've divided
In three our kingdom: and 'tis our fast intent
To shake all cares and business from our age;
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
Unburden'd crawl toward death. — Our son of Cornwall,
And you, our no less loving son of Albany,
We have this hour a constant will[7] to publish
Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife
May be prevented now.[8] The Princes, France and Burgundy,
Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
Long in our Court have made their amorous sojourn,
And here are to be answer'd. — Tell me, my daughters, —
Since now we will divest us both of rule,
Interest of territory, cares of State, —
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge.[9] — Goneril,
Our eldest-born, speak first.

[5] *Shall* where we should use *will*. The two were very often used indiscriminately in the Poet's time. The Bible has many instances.

[6] Lear's "darker purpose" is probably that of surprising his daughters into a rivalry of affection. This he has hitherto *kept dark* about; though his scheme of dividing the kingdom was known, at least in the Court.

[7] "*Constant* will" is *fixed* or *determined* will; the same as "*fast* intent."

[8] "That future strife may be prevented *by what we now do*."

[9] Mr. Joseph Crosby's explanation of this is clearly the right one. *Nature* is put for *natural affection*, and *with merit* is used as an adverbial phrase: "That I may extend my largest bounty where natural affection justly, or *meritoriously*, challenges it"; that is, *claims it as due*.

Gon. Sir,
I love you more than words can wield the matter;[10]
Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;
Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;
As much as child e'er loved, or father found;
A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable:
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.[11]

Cord. [*Aside.*] What shall Cordelia do? Love, and be silent.

Lear. Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,
With shadowy forests and with champains rich'd,[12]
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,
We make thee lady:[13] to thine and Albany's issue
Be this perpetual. — What says our second daughter,
Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.

Reg. Sir,
I'm made of that self[14] metal as my sister,
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
I find she names my very deed of love;
Only she comes too short, — that I profess[15]
Myself an enemy to all other joys,
Which the most precious square of sense[16] possesses;

[10] "My love is a matter so weighty that words cannot *express* or *sustain* it."

[11] Beyond all assignable quantity. "I love you so much, that there is no possibility of telling how much."

[12] *Rich'd* for *enriched.* — *Champains* are *plains;* hence *fertile.*

[13] The *lord* of a thing is, strictly speaking, the *owner* of it. And *lady* is here used as the counterpart of *lord* in this sense. So that to make one the *lady* of a thing is to make her the *owner* or *possessor* of it.

[14] The Poet often uses *self* with the sense of *self-same.*

[15] "She comes short of me *in this*, that I profess," &c.

[16] By *square of sense* I understand *fulness of sensibility* or *capacity of joy.* So that the meaning seems to be, "Which the finest susceptibility of happi-

And find I am alone felicitate[17]
In your dear Highness' love.
Cord. [*Aside.*] Then poor Cordelia!
And yet, not so; since, I am sure, my love's
More richer[18] than my tongue.
Lear. To thee and thine hereditary ever
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom;
No less in space, validity,[19] and pleasure,
Than that conferr'd on Goneril. — Now, our joy,
Although our last, not least; to whose young love
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interess'd;[20] what can you say, to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.
Cord. Nothing, my lord.
Lear. Nothing!
Cord. Nothing.
Lear. Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.
Cord. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth:[21] I love your Majesty
According to my bond;[22] nor more nor less.

ness is capable of." Some have stumbled at the word *square* here. But why not "*square* of sense" as well as *circle of the senses?* which would be a very intelligible expression.

17 *Felicitate*, a shortened form of *felicitated*, is *fortunate* or *made happy*. The Poet has many preterites so shortened; as *consecrate*, *suffocate*, &c.

18 Double comparatives, like *more richer*, also double superlatives, like *most unkindest*, also double negatives, like *nor is not*, were very common in Shakespeare's time.

19 *Validity* for *value* or *worth*. Repeatedly so.

20 To *interest* and to *interesse* are not, perhaps, different spellings of the same verb, but two distinct words, though of the same import; the one being derived from the Latin, the other from the French *interesser*.

21 We have the same thought well expressed in *The Maid's Tragedy* of Beaumont and Fletcher, i. 1: "My mouth is much too narrow for my heart."

22 *Bond* was used of any thing that *binds* or *obliges;* that is, *duty*.

Lear. How, how, Cordelia! mend your speech a little,
Lest it may mar your fortunes.
Cord. Good my lord,[23]
You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I
Return those duties back as[24] are right fit;
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty:
Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all.
Lear. But goes thy heart with this?
Cord. Ay, good my lord.
Lear. So young, and so untender?
Cord. So young, my lord, and true.
Lear. Let it be so; thy truth, then, be thy dower:
For, by the sacred radiance of the Sun,
The mysteries of Hecate, and the night;
By all the operation of the orbs
From whom[25] we do exist, and cease to be;
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee, from this, for ever. The barbarous Scythian,
Or he that makes his generation[26] messes
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom

[23] We should say "My good lord." The Poet abounds in such inversions. So "dear my mother," "sweet my sister," "gentle my brother," &c.
[24] *As* is here a relative pronoun, referring to *those duties; which* or *that*. The word was used very loosely in the Poet's time.
[25] The relatives *who* and *which* were used indiscriminately.
[26] Probably meaning his *children;* perhaps simply his *kind*.

Be as well neighbour'd, pitied, and relieved,
As thou my sometime[27] daughter.
Kent. Good my liege,—
Lear. Peace, Kent!
Come not between the dragon and his wrath:
I loved her most, and thought to set my rest
On her kind nursery: hence, and avoid my sight![28]
So be my grave my peace, as here I give
Her father's heart from her!—Call France: who stirs?
Call Burgundy.—Cornwall and Albany,
With my two daughters' dowers digest this third:
Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.
I do invest you jointly with my power,
Pre-eminence, and all the large effects
That troop with majesty. Ourself, by monthly course,
With reservation of an hundred knights
By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode
Make with you by due turns. Only we still retain
The name, and all th' additions to a king;[29]
The sway, revénue, execution of the rest,
Belovèd sons, be yours: which to confirm,
This coronet part between you. [*Giving the crown.*
Kent. Royal Lear,
Whom I have ever honour'd as my King,
Loved as my father, as my master follow'd,
As my great patron thought on in my prayers,—
Lear. The bow is bent and drawn, make from the shaft.

[27] *Sometime*, here, is *former* or *formerly*. See *Hamlet*, page 48, note 12.

[28] As Kent has said nothing to provoke this snappish order, we are probably to suppose that Lear, knowing his man, anticipates a bold remonstrance from him, and, in his excited mood, flares up at the thought of such a thing. So he says to him a little after, "Out of my sight."

[29] All the *titles* or *marks of honour* pertaining to *royalty*.

Kent. Let it fall rather, though the fork invade
The region of my heart: be Kent unmannerly,
When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man?
Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak,
When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's bound,
When majesty falls to folly. Reverse thy doom;
And in thy best consideration check
This hideous rashness: answer my life my judgment,[30]
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound
Reverbs[31] no hollowness.

Lear. Kent, on thy life, no more.

Kent. My life I never held but as a pawn
To wage against thine enemies;[32] nor fear to lose it,
Thy safety being the motive.

Lear. Out of my sight!

Kent. See better, Lear; and let me still remain
The true blank of thine eye.[33]

Lear. Now, by Apollo,—

Kent. Now, by Apollo, King,
Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.

Lear. [*Grasping his sword.*] O vassal, miscreant!

Alb. } Dear sir, forbear.
Corn. }

[30] "Let my life be answerable for my judgment," or, "I will stake my life on the truth of what I say."

[31] *Reverbs* for *reverberates*; probably a word of the Poet's own coining. Here it has the sense of *report* or *proclaim*.

[32] To *wage* is to *wager*, to *stake* or *hazard*. So that Kent's meaning is, "I never held my life but as a thing to be impawned or put in pledge against your enemies"

[33] The *blank* is the *mark* at which men shoot. "See better," says Kent, "and let me be the mark to direct your sight, that you err not."

Kent. Do;
Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow
Upon the foul disease.[34] Revoke thy gift;
Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,
I'll tell thee thou dost evil.
Lear. Hear me, recreant!
On thine allegiance hear me!
Since thou hast sought to make us break our vow,—
Which we durst never yet,—and with strain'd pride
To come between our sentence and our power,—
Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,—
Our potency made good, take thy reward.[35]
Five days we do allot thee, for provision
To shield thee from diseases[36] of the world;
And, on the sixth, to turn thy hated back
Upon our kingdom: if, on the tenth day following,
Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,
The moment is thy death. Away! by Jupiter,
This shall not be revoked.
Kent. Fare thee well, King: since thus thou wilt appear,
Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.—
[*To* CORD.] The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,
That justly think'st, and hast most rightly said!—
[*To* REG. *and* GON.] And your large speeches may your deeds approve,[37]
That good effects may spring from words of love.—
Thus Kent, O Princes! bids you all adieu;
He'll shape his old course in a country new. [*Exit.*

[34] Kill the doctor, and pay the disease. Here we begin to taste that electric energy of expression which marks this drama.

[35] That is, "Take thy reward *in* or *by a demonstration* of our power."

[36] *Disease* in its old sense of *discomfort* or what causes uneasiness.

[37] *Approve* in the sense of *make good*, or *prove true* Often so.

Re-enter GLOSTER, *with* FRANCE, BURGUNDY, *and* Attendants.

Glos. Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.

Lear. My Lord of Burgundy,
We first address toward you, who with this King
Hath rivall'd for our daughter: what, in the least,
Will you require in present dower with her,
Or cease your quest[38] of love?

Burg. Most royal Majesty,
I crave no more than hath your Highness offer'd,
Nor will you tender less.

Lear. Right-noble Burgundy,
When she was dear to us, we did hold her so;
But now her price is fall'n. Sir, there she stands:
If aught within that little seeming substance,
Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced,[39]
And nothing more, may fitly like your Grace,
She's there, and she is yours.

Burg. I know no answer.

Lear. Will you, with those infirmities she owes,[40]
Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate,
Dower'd with our curse, and stranger'd with our oath,
Take her, or leave her?

Burg. Pardon me, royal sir;
Election makes not up on such conditions.

Lear. Then leave her, sir; for, by the power that made me,

[38] A *quest* is a *seeking* or *pursuit:* the expedition in which a knight was engaged is often so named in *The Faerie Queene.*

[39] With our displeasure *added to it;* as in the common phrase of *piecing out* a thing. — *Like*, in the next line, was continually used where we should use *please. It likes me* is, in old language, the same as *I like it.*

[40] *Owes* and *owns* are but different forms of the same word.

I tell you all her wealth. — For you, great King,
I would not from your love make such a stray,
To match [41] you where I hate; therefore beseech you
T' avert your liking a more worthier way
Than on a wretch whom Nature is ashamed
Almost t' acknowledge hers.

France. This is most strange,
That she, who even but now was your best object,
The argument of your praise, balm of your age,
The best, the dearest, should in this trice of time
Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle
So many folds of favour! Sure, her offence
Must be of such unnatural degree,
That monsters it, or your fore-vouch'd affection
Fall'n into taint: [42] which to believe of her,
Must be a faith that reason without miracle
Could never plant in me.

Cord. I yet beseech your Majesty,
(If for I want [43] that glib and oily art,
To speak and purpose not; since what I well intend,
I'll do't before I speak,) that you make known
It is no vicious blot, murder, [44] or foulness,

[41] "Such a stray, *as* to match." So again in the next speech: "So monstrous, *as* to dismantle." The Poet omits *as* in such cases, when the verse is against it.

[42] "*Must be* fall'n" is the meaning. *Taint* for *attaint* or *attainder*. "The affection which you before professed must have fallen under reproach or impeachment as fickle or false." — "Of *such* unnatural degree, *that monsters it*," is of such unnatural degree *as to be monstrous*, or *prove her a monster*.

[43] That is, "If *it be because* I want," or "If *you are doing this because* I want." The use of *for* in the sense of *because* is very frequent.

[44] *Murder* seems a strange word to be used here; but perhaps Cordelia purposely uses it out of place, as a glance at the hyperbolical absurdity of denouncing her as "a wretch whom Nature is ashamed to acknowledge."

No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step,
That hath deprived me of your grace and favour;
But even the want of that for which I'm richer, —
A still-soliciting eye,[45] and such a tongue
As I am glad I have not, though not to have it
Hath lost me in your liking.

Lear. Better thou
Hadst not been born than not t' have pleased me better.

France. Is it but this, — a tardiness in nature
Which often leaves the history unspoke
That it intends to do? — My Lord of Burgundy,
What say you to the lady? Love's not love
When it is mingled with regards[46] that stand
Aloof from the entire point. Will you have her?
She is herself a dowry.

Burg. Royal Lear,
Give but that portion which yourself proposed,
And here I take Cordelia by the hand,
Duchess of Burgundy.

Lear. Nothing: I have sworn; I am firm.

Burg. I'm sorry, then, you have so lost a father,
That you must lose a husband.

Cord. Peace be with Burgundy!
Since that respects of fortune are his love,
I shall not be his wife.

France. Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor,

[45] "A *soliciting* eye" here means a *greedy, self-seeking, covetous* eye. The Poet often has *still* in the sense of *ever* or *continually*. — The preceding line will hardly bear a grammatical analysis, but the sense is plain enough. "The want of that for which" means, simply, "that want for which," or, if you please, "the want of that for the want of which."

[46] *Regards* for *considerations* or *inducements*. The same with *respects* in the fourth speech after. So the latter word is commonly used by the Poet.

Most choice, forsaken ; and most loved, despised ;
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon :
Be't lawful, I take up what's cast away. —
Gods, gods ! 'tis strange that from their cold'st neglect
My love should kindle to inflamed respect. —
Thy dowerless daughter, King, thrown to my chance,
Is Queen of us, of ours, and our fair France :
Not all the Dukes of waterish [47] Burgundy
Shall buy this únprized precious maid of me. —
Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind :
Thou losest here, a better where to find.

Lear. Thou hast her, France : let her be thine ; for we
Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
That face of hers again. — Therefore be gone
Without our grace, our love, our benison. [48] —
Come, noble Burgundy.

[*Flourish.* *Exeunt* LEAR, BURGUNDY, CORNWALL, ALBANY, GLOSTER, *and* Attendants.

France. Bid farewell to your sisters.

Cord. Ye jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes
Cordelia leaves you : I know you what you are ;
And, like a sister, am most loth to call
Your faults as they are named. Love well our father :
To your professèd [49] bosoms I commit him ;
But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,
I would prefer him to a better place.
So, farewell to you both.

47 *Waterish* is here used with a dash of contempt. Burgundy, a level, well-watered country, was famous for its pastures and dairy-produce.

48 The Poet uses *benison* for *blessing*, when he wants a trisyllable.

49 *Professèd* for *professing ;* the passive form with the active sense. So in *Paradise Lost*, i., 486 : " Likening his Maker to the *grazèd* ox."

Gon. Prescribe not us our duties.

Reg. Let your study
Be to content your lord, who hath received you
At fortune's alms. You have obedience scanted,
And well are worth the want that you have wanted.[50]

Cord. Time shall unfold what plighted[51] cunning hides:
Who cover faults, at last shame them derides.
Well may you prosper!

France. Come, my fair Cordelia.

[*Exeunt* FRANCE *and* CORDELIA.

Gon. Sister, it is not a little I have to say of what most nearly appertains to us both. I think our father will hence to-night.

Reg. That's most certain, and with you; next month with us.

Gon. You see how full of changes his age is; the observation we have made of it hath not been little: he always loved our sister most; and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly.

Reg. 'Tis the infirmity of his age: yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself.

Gon. The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash; then must we look to receive from his age, not alone the imperfections of long-engraffed condition,[52] but therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them.

Reg. Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment.

[50] "You well deserve to want that in which you have been wanting."

[51] *Plight*, *pleat*, and *plait* are but different forms of the same word, all meaning to *fold*, *complicate*, and so *make dark*.

[52] *Temper*, or *disposition*, set and confirmed by long habit.

Gon. There is further compliment of leave-taking between France and him. Pray you, let us hit together: [53] if our father carry authority with such dispositions as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us.

Reg. We shall further think of it.

Gon. We must do something, and i' the heat.[54]

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. — *A Hall in* GLOSTER'S *Castle.*

Enter EDMUND, *with a Letter.*

Edm. Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound.[1] Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,[2]
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous, and my shape as true,

[53] "Let us *agree* or *unite* in the same plan or course of action." — The meaning of what follows probably is, "If the King continue in the same rash, headstrong, and inconstant temper as he has just shown in snatching back his authority the moment his will is crossed, we shall be the worse off for his surrender of the kingdom to us."

[54] So in the common phrase, "Strike while the iron's hot."

1 In this speech of Edmund you see, as soon as a man cannot reconcile himself to reason, how his conscience flies off by way of appeal to Nature, who is sure upon such occasions never to find fault; and also how shame sharpens a predisposition in the heart to evil. — COLERIDGE.

2 To "stand in the plague of custom" is, in Edmund's sense, to lie under the ban of conventional disability. — "The curiosity of nations" is the moral strictness of civil institutions; especially the law of marriage, and the exclusion of bastards from the rights of inheritance. — To *deprive* was sometimes used for to *cut off*, to *disinherit*. *Exheredo* is rendered by this word in the old dictionaries.

As honest madam's issue?[3] Well, then,
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land:
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
As to th' legitimate: fine word,—*legitimate!*
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
Shall top th' legitimate.[4] I grow; I prosper:—
Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

Enter GLOSTER.

Glos. Kent banish'd thus! and France in choler parted![5]
And the King gone to-night! subscribed his power!
Confined to exhibition! All this done
Upon the gad![6]—Edmund, how now! what news?

Edm. So please your lordship, none.

[*Putting up the letter.*

Glos. Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter?

Edm. I know no news, my lord.

Glos. What paper were you reading?

Edm. Nothing, my lord.

[3] From the first drawing-up of the curtain, Edmund has stood before us in the united strength and beauty of earliest manhood. Our eyes have been questioning him. Gifted as he is with high advantages of person, and further endowed by Nature with a powerful intellect and a strong and energetic will, even without any concurrence of circumstances and accident pride will necessarily be the sin that most easily besets him. But Edmund is also the known and acknowledged son of the princely Gloster; he therefore has both the germ of pride, and the conditions best fitted to evolve and ripen it into a predominant feeling.—COLERIDGE.

[4] To *top* is to *rise above*, to *surpass*. A very frequent usage.

[5] *Parted* for *departed*. Also a frequent usage.

[6] "*Subscribed* his power," is *yielded* or *given up* his power; as when we say a man has signed away his wealth, his freedom, or his rights.—"*Confined* to *exhibition*" is *limited* to *an allowance*. So in Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*: "Thou art a younger brother, and hast nothing but thy bare

Glos. No? What needed, then, that terrible[7] dispatch of it into your pocket? the quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself. Let's see: come; if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.

Edm. I beseech you, sir, pardon me: it is a letter from my brother, that I have not all o'er-read; and, for so much as I have perused, I find it not fit for your o'er-looking.

Glos. Give me the letter, sir.

Edm. I shall offend, either to detain or give it. The contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.

Glos. Let's see, let's see.

Edm. I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this but as an essay or taste of my virtue.

Glos. [Reads.] *This policy and reverence of age*[8] *makes the world bitter to the best of our times; keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find an idle and fond*[9] *bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny; who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffer'd. Come to me, that of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother,* EDGAR.

Hum — conspiracy! — *Sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue,* — My son Edgar! Had he a hand

exhibition." The word is still so used in the English Universities. — *Upon the gad* is *in haste;* the same as *upon the spur.* A *gad* was a sharp-pointed piece of steel, used in driving oxen; hence *goaded.*

[7] *Terrible* because done as if *from terror.*

[8] That is, this policy, or custom, *of reverencing* age. The idea is, that the honouring of fathers and mothers is an old superstition, which smart boys ought to cast off, knock their fathers on the head, and so have a good time while they are young. We have a like expression in scene 4: "This milky *gentleness and* course of yours." See *Hamlet,* page 50, note 22.

[9] Here, as commonly in Shakespeare, *fond* is *foolish.*

to write this? a heart and brain to breed it in?—When came this to you? who brought it?

Edm. It was not brought me, my lord; there's the cunning of it: I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet.

Glos. You know the character to be your brother's?

Edm. If the matter were good, my lord, I durst swear it were his; but, in respect of that, I would fain think it were not.

Glos. It is his.

Edm. It is his hand, my lord; but I hope his heart is not in the contents.

Glos. Hath he never before sounded you in this business?

Edm. Never, my lord: but I have often heard him maintain it to be fit, that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declining, the father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue.

Glos. O, villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter! Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested,[10] brutish villain! worse than brutish!—Go, sirrah, seek him; I'll apprehend him. Abominable villain! Where is he?

Edm. I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother till you can derive from him better testimony of his intent, you shall run a certain course; where,[11] if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a great gap in your own honour, and shake in pieces the heart of his obedience. I dare pawn down my life for him, that he

[10] *Detested* for *detestable*. The Poet so uses a good many words ending in *ed*. See *King Richard the Second*, page 79, note 35.

[11] *Where* and *whereas* were used indiscriminately.—Here, "a *certain* course," is a *safe* or *sure* course.

hath writ this to feel my affection to your Honour, and to no other pretence [12] of danger.

Glos. Think you so?

Edm. If your Honour judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and by an auricular assurance have your satisfaction; and that without any further delay than this very evening.

Glos. He cannot be such a monster —

Edm. Nor is not, sure.

Glos. — to his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him. — Heaven and Earth! — Edmund, seek him out; wind me into him,[13] I pray you: frame the business after your own wisdom. I would unstate myself to be in a due resolution.[14]

Edm. I will seek him, sir, presently; convey[15] the business as I shall find means, and acquaint you withal.

Glos. These late eclipses in the Sun and Moon portend no good to us: though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects:[16] love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond crack'd 'twixt son and father. This villain of

[12] *Pretence* was very often used for *intention* or *purpose*. See the fourth scene of this Act, note 8. Also *Macbeth*, page 93, note 52.

[13] *Me* is here *expletive*. — *Wind into him* is the same as our phrase "worm yourself into him"; that is, find out his hidden purpose.

[14] "I would give my whole estate, all that I possess, to be *satisfied* or *assured* in the matter." The Poet often has *resolve* in the sense of *assure* or *inform*.

[15] To *convey*, as the word is here used, is to *manage* or *carry through* a thing adroitly, or as by sleight of hand. See *Macbeth*, page 138, note 12.

[16] "Though reason or natural philosophy may make out that these strange events proceed from the regular operation of natural laws, and so have no moral purpose or significance, yet we find them followed by calamities, as in punishment of our sins.

mine comes under the prediction; there's son against father: the King falls from bias of nature; there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time: machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves. Find out this villain, Edmund; it shall lose thee nothing; do it carefully. — And the noble and true-hearted Kent banish'd! his offence, honesty! 'Tis strange. [*Exit.*

Edm. This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, — often the surfeit of our own behaviour, — we make guilty of our disasters the Sun, the Moon, and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers,[17] by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting-on.[18] Edgar! — pat he comes, like the catastrophe of the old comedy:[19] my cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam. —

Enter EDGAR.

O, these eclipses do portend these divisions! Fa, sol, la, mi.[20]

[17] *Treachers* for *traitors*. The word is used by Chaucer and Spenser.

[18] Warburton thinks that the dotages of judicial astrology were meant to be satirized in this speech. Coleridge remarks upon Edmund's philosophizing as follows: "Thus scorn and misanthropy are often the anticipations and mouthpieces of wisdom in the detection of superstitions. Both individuals and nations may be free from such prejudices by being below them, as well as by rising above them."

[19] Perhaps alluding, satirically, to the awkward catastrophies of the old comedies, which were coarsely contrived so as to have the persons enter, pat, just when they were wanted on the stage. — *Cue*, as here used, is *prompt-word* or *hint*. — *Bedlam*, an old corruption of *Bethlehem*, was a well-known hospital for the insane. — *Tom* was a name commonly given to Bedlamites. An instance of it will be seen afterwards in Edgar.

[20] "Shakespeare shows by the context that he was well acquainted with

Edg. How now, brother Edmund! what serious contemplation are you in?

Edm. I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other day, what should follow these eclipses.

Edg. Do you busy yourself with that?

Edm. I promise you, the effects he writes of succeed unhappily;[21] as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent; death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities; divisions in State; menaces and maledictions against king and nobles; needless diffidences,[22] banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what.

Edg. How long have you been a sectary astronomical?[23]

Edm. Come, come; when saw you my father last?

Edg. The night gone by.

Edm. Spake you with him?

Edg. Ay, two hours together.

Edm. Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure in him by word or countenance?

Edg. None at all.

Edm. Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended him; and at my entreaty forbear his presence till some little

the property of these syllables in solmization, which imply a series of sounds so unnatural that ancient musicians prohibited their use. Edmund, speaking of the eclipses as portents, compares the dislocation of events, the *times being out of joint*, to the unnatural and offensive sounds *fa sol la mi*." So says Dr. Burney. But Mr. Chappell, probably a better authority, assures Mr. W. A. Wright, the Clarendon Editor, that there is no foundation for Burney's remark; and that "Edmund is merely singing to himself in order not to seem to observe Edgar's approach."

[21] That is, *turn out badly*. The Poet often uses *success* for *issue* or *consequence*, whether good or bad. The usage was common.

[22] *Diffidences* for *distrustings*, ruptures of confidence. An old usage.

[23] "How long have you belonged to the *sect of astronomers?*" Judicial astrology, as it is called, formerly had its schools and professors.

time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure; which at this instant so rageth in him, that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely allay.[24]

Edg. Some villain hath done me wrong.

Edm. That's my fear. I pray you, have a continent[25] forbearance till the speed of his rage goes slower; and, as I say, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak. Pray ye, go; there's my key: if you do stir abroad, go arm'd.

Edg. Arm'd, brother!

Edm. Brother, I advise you to the best; I am no honest man, if there be any good meaning towards you: I have told you what I have seen and heard, but faintly;[26] nothing like the image and horror of it: pray you, away.

Edg. Shall I hear from you anon?

Edm. I do serve you in this business.— [*Exit* EDGAR

A credulous father! and a brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms,
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
My practices[27] ride easy! I see the business.
Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit:
All with me's meet that I can fashion fit. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*A Room in* ALBANY'S *Palace.*

Enter GONERIL *and* OSWALD.

Gon. Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his Fool?

[24] *Allay* in the sense of *subside* or *be appeased.*—*Mischief*, here, is much stronger than in our use; *violence*, perhaps *destruction.*

[25] *Continent* in its old sense of *self-restrained* or *subdued.*

[26] *Faintly* is *imperfectly*, and qualifies *told.*

[27] *Contrivance, plot, stratagem* are old meanings of *practice.*

Osw. Ay, madam.

Gon. By day and night he wrongs me; every hour
He flashes into one gross crime or other,
That sets us all at odds: I'll not endure it:
His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us
On every trifle. When he returns from hunting,
I will not speak with him; say I am sick:
If you come slack of former services,
You shall do well; the fault of 't I'll answer. [*Horns within.*

Osw. He's coming, madam; I hear him.

Gon. Put on what weary negligence you please,
You and your fellows; I'd have it come to question:
If he distaste it, let him to my sister,
Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,
Not to be over-ruled. Idle old man,
That still would manage those authorities
That he hath given away! Now, by my life,
Old fools are babes again; and must be used
With checks, when flatteries are seen abused.
Remember what I've said.

Osw. Very well, madam.

Gon. And let his knights have colder looks among you:
What grows of it, no matter; advise your fellows so.
I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,
That I may speak: I'll write straight to my sister,
To hold my very course. Prepare for dinner. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*A Hall in the Same.*

Enter KENT,[1] *disguised.*

Kent. If but as well I other accents borrow,

[1] Kent is perhaps the nearest to perfect goodness in all Shakespeare characters. There is an extraordinary charm in his bluntness, which is

That can my speech diffuse,[2] my good intent
May carry through itself to that full issue
For which I razed my likeness. Now, banish'd Kent,
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd, —
So may it come! — thy master, whom thou lovest,
Shall find thee full of labours.

Horns within. *Enter* LEAR, Knights, *and* Attendants.

Lear. Let me not stay a jot for dinner; go get it ready [*Exit an* Attendant.] — How now! what art thou?

Kent. A man, sir.

Lear. What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us?

Kent. I do profess to be no less than I seem; to serve him truly that will put me in trust; to love him that is honest; to converse with him that is wise, and says little;[3] to fear judgment; to fight, when I cannot choose; and to eat no fish.[4]

Lear. What art thou?

that only of a nobleman arising from a contempt of overstrained courtesy, and combined with easy placability where goodness of heart is apparent. His passionate affection for, and fidelity to, Lear act on our feelings in Lear's own favour: virtue itself seems to be in company with him. — COLERIDGE.

[2] To *diffuse* here means to *disguise*, to render *strange*, to *obscure*. The Poet has "*diffused* attire," and "*diffusèd* song," in much the same sense. Of course Kent is apprehensive that his speech or accents may betray him, and thus defeat the purpose for which he has disguised his person.

[3] To *converse* signifies properly to *keep company*, to have *commerce* with. His meaning is, that he chooses for his companions men who are not tattlers or talebearers.

[4] *Eating fish* on the fast-days of the Church, though enjoined by the civil authorities, was odious to the more advanced Protestants as a badge of popery. So in Marston's *Dutch Courtezan*: "I trust I am none of *the wicked* that *eat fish* a fridays." This is probably the reason why Kent makes eating no fish a recommendation to employment.

Kent. A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the King.

Lear. If thou be as poor for a subject as he is for a king, thou art poor enough. What wouldst thou?

Kent. Service.

Lear. Who wouldst thou serve?

Kent. You.

Lear. Dost thou know me, fellow?

Kent. No, sir; but you have that in your countenance which I would fain call master.

Lear. What's that?

Kent. Authority.

Lear. What services canst thou do?

Kent. I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly: that which ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in; and the best of me is diligence.

Lear. How old art thou?

Kent. Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing, nor so old to dote on her for any thing: I have years on my back forty-eight.

Lear. Follow me; thou shalt serve me: if I like thee no worse after dinner, I will not part from thee yet. — Dinner, ho, dinner! — Where's my knave?[5] my Fool? — Go you, and call my Fool hither. — [*Exit an* Attendant.

Enter OSWALD.

You, you, sirrah, where's my daughter?

Osw. So please you, — [*Exit.*

Lear. What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll[6]

[5] *Knave* was a common term of familiar endearment.

[6] *Clot* is *clod*, and *poll* is *head*; so that *clotpoll* comes to *blockhead*.

back. [*Exit a* Knight.] — Where's my Fool, ho? — I think the world's asleep. —

Re-enter the Knight.

How now! where's that mongrel?

Knight. He says, my lord, your daughter is not well.

Lear. Why came not the slave back to me when I call'd him?

Knight. Sir, he answered me in the roundest [7] manner, he would not.

Lear. He would not!

Knight. My lord, I know not what the matter is; but, to my judgment, your Highness is not entertain'd with that ceremonious affection as you were wont: there's a great abatement of kindness appears as well in the general dependants as in the Duke himself also and your daughter.

Lear. Ha! say'st thou so?

Knight. I beseech you, pardon me, my lord, if I be mistaken; for my duty cannot be silent when I think your Highness wrong'd.

Lear. Thou but remember'st me of mine own conception: I have perceived a most faint neglect of late; which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very pretence [8] and purpose of unkindness: I will look further into't. — But where's my Fool? I have not seen him this two days.

[7] *Round* is *blunt, downright, plain-spoken.* So in *King Henry the Fifth*, iv. 1: "Your reproof is something too *round*: I should be angry with you, if the time were convenient."

[8] "Jealous curiosity" seems to mean a suspicious, prying scrutiny, on the watch to detect slights and neglects. — *Pretence*, again, for *intent* or *design*. — *Very* in the sense of *real* or *deliberate*. — The passage is rather curious as discovering a sort of double consciousness in the old King.

Knight. Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the Fool hath much pined away.[9]

Lear. No more of that; I have noted it well. — Go you, and tell my daughter I would speak with her. [*Exit an* Attendant.] — Go you, call hither my Fool. —

[*Exit an* Attendant.

Re-enter OSWALD.

O, you sir, you, come you hither, sir: who am I, sir?

Osw. My lady's father.

Lear. *My lady's father!* my lord's knave: you dog! you slave! you cur!

Osw. I am none of these, my lord, I beseech your pardon.

Lear. Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal?

[*Striking him.*

Osw. I'll not be struck, my lord.

Kent. Nor tripp'd neither, you base foot-ball player.

[*Tripping up his heels.*

Lear. I thank thee, fellow; thou servest me, and I'll love thee.

Kent. Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differences: away, away! If you will measure your lubber's length again, tarry: but away! go to; have you wisdom? so.

[*Pushes* OSWALD *out.*

[9] This aptly touches the keynote of the Fool's character. "The Fool," says Coleridge, "is no comic buffoon to make the groundlings laugh, — no forced condescension of Shakespeare's genius to the taste of his audience. Accordingly the Poet prepares for his introduction, which he never does with any of his common clowns and Fools, by bringing him into living connection with the pathos of the play. He is as wonderful a creation as Caliban: his wild babblings and inspired idiocy articulate and gauge the horrors of the scene."

Lear. Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee: there's earnest of thy service. [*Giving him money.*

Enter the Fool.

Fool. Let me hire him too: — here's my coxcomb.[10] [*Offering* Kent *his cap.*

Lear. How now, my pretty knave! how dost thou?

Fool. Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.

Kent. Why, Fool?

Fool. Why, for taking one's part that's out of favour. Nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits,[11] thou'lt catch cold shortly: there, take my coxcomb. Why, this fellow has banish'd two on's daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will: if thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb. — How now, nuncle![12] Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters!

Lear. Why, my boy?

Fool. If I gave them all my living, I'd keep my coxcombs myself. There's mine; beg another of thy daughters.

Lear. Take heed, sirrah, — the whip.

Fool. Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipp'd

[10] A *coxcomb* was one of the badges of an "allowed Fool." It was a cap with a piece of red cloth sewn upon the top, to resemble the comb of a cock. A small bell was added; so that "cap and bell" was sometimes a Fool's designation.

[11] To "smile as the wind sits" is to fall in with and humour the disposition of those in power, or to curry favour with those who have rewards to bestow. The Fool means that Kent has earned the name of fool by not doing this, and should wear the appropriate badge.

[12] A familiar contraction of *mine uncle*. It seems that the common appellation of the old licensed Fool to his superiors was *uncle*. In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Pilgrim*, when Alinda assumes the character of a Fool, she uses the same language. She meets Alfonso, and calls him *nuncle;* to which he replies by calling her *naunt*.

out, when Lady, the brach,[13] may stand by the fire, and stink.

Lear. A pestilent gall to me!

Fool. Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

Lear. Do.

Fool. Mark it, nuncle:

Have more than thou showest,
Speak less than thou knowest,
Lend less than thou owest,[14]
Ride more than thou goest,
Learn more than thou trowest,[15]
Set less than thou throwest;
And thou shalt have more
Than two tens to a score.

Kent. This is nothing, Fool.

Fool. Then 'tis like the breath[16] of an unfee'd lawyer; you gave me nothing for't. — Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle?

Lear. Why, no, boy; nothing can be made out of nothing.

Fool. [*To* KENT.] Pr'ythee, tell him, so much the rent of his land comes to: he will not believe a fool.

Lear. A bitter Fool.

Fool. Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet one?

[13] It appears that *brach* was a general term for a keen-scented hound. *Lady* is here used as the name of a female hound.

[14] That is, do not lend all that thou hast: *owe* for *own*.

[15] To *trow* is to believe. The precept is admirable. — *Set*, in the next line, means *stake*: stake less than the value of what you throw *for* in the dice.

[16] *Breath* is here used for that in which a lawyer's breath is sometimes spent, — *words*.

Lear. No, lad; teach me.

Fool. That lord that counsell'd thee
To give away thy land,
Come place him here by me,
Or do thou for him stand:
The sweet and bitter fool
Will presently appear;
The one in motley here,
The other found out there.

Lear. Dost thou call me fool, boy?

Fool. All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with.

Kent. This is not altogether fool, my lord.

Fool. No, faith, lords and great men will not let me; if I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't: and ladies too, they will not let me have all fool to myself; they'll be snatching. — Give me an egg, nuncle, and I'll give thee two crowns.

Lear. What two crowns shall they be?

Fool. Why, after I have cut the egg i' the middle, and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy crown i' the middle, and gavest away both parts, thou borest thine ass on thy back over the dirt:[17] thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown, when thou gavest thy golden one away. If I speak like myself in this, let him be whipp'd that first finds it so.

[Sings.] *Fools had ne'er less grace in a year;*[18]
For wise men are grown foppish,

[17] Alluding, no doubt, to the fable of the old man and his ass.

[18] "There never was a time when fools were less in favour; and the reason is, that they were never so little wanted, for wise men now supply their place."

And know not how their wits to wear,
Their manners are so apish.

Lear. When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah?

Fool. I have used it, nuncle, e'er since thou madest thy daughters thy mothers: for when thou gavest them the rod,

[Sings.] *Then they for sudden joy did weep,*
And I for sorrow sung,
That such a king should play bo-peep,
And go the fools among.

Pr'ythee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy Fool to lie: I would fain learn to lie.

Lear. An you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipp'd.

Fool. I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are: they'll have me whipp'd for speaking true, thou'lt have me whipp'd for lying; and sometimes I am whipp'd for holding my peace. I had rather be any kind o' thing than a Fool: and yet I would not be thee, nuncle; thou hast pared thy wit o' both sides, and left nothing i' the middle. Here comes one o' the parings.

Enter GONERIL.

Lear. How now, daughter! what makes that frontlet on?[19] Methinks you are too much of late i' the frown.

Fool. Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to care for her frowning; now thou art an O without a figure: I am better than thou art now; I am a Fool, thou art nothing. — [*To* GON.] Yes, forsooth, I will hold my

[19] "What *means* that *frown* on your brow?" or, "What business has it there?" The verb to *make* was often used thus. A *frontlet* is said to have been a cloth worn on the forehead by ladies to prevent wrinkles. Of course Goneril enters with a *cloud of anger* in her face. So in *Zepheria*, 1594: "And vayle thy face with *frownes* as with a *frontlet*."

tongue: so your face bids me, though you say nothing. Mum, mum,

He that keeps nor crust nor crum,
Weary of all, shall want some. —

That's a sheal'd peascod.[20] [*Pointing to* LEAR.

Gon. Not only, sir, this your all-licensed Fool,
But other of your insolent retinue
Do hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth
In rank and not-to-be-endurèd riots.
Sir,
I had thought, by making this well known unto you,
T' have found a safe redress; but now grow fearful,
By what yourself too late have spoke and done,
That you protect this course, and put it on
By your allowance;[21] which if you should, the fault
Would not 'scape censure, nor the redresses sleep,
Which, in the tender of a wholesome weal,[22]
Might in their working do you that offence,
Which else were shame, that then necessity
Will call discreet proceeding.

Fool. For you trow, nuncle,

The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,
That it had its head bit off by its young.[23]

[20] Now a mere husk that contains nothing. *Cod*, or *peascod*, is the old name of what we call *pod*, or *peapod*.

[21] To "*put* it *on* by your *allowance*" is to *encourage* it by your *approval*. *Put on* for *incite* or *set on* was very common. Also *allow* and its derivatives in the sense of *approve*. See *Hamlet*, page 134, note 6.

[22] "The tender of a wholesome weal" is the taking care that the commonwealth be kept in a sound and healthy state. To *tender* a thing is to *be careful* of it. See *Hamlet*, page 73, note 27. *Wholesome* is here used proleptically. See *Macbeth*, page 113, note 11.

[23] Alluding to a trick which the cuckoo has of laying her eggs in the sparrow's nest, to be hatched, and the cuckoo's chicks fed by the sparrow,

So, out went the candle, and we were left darkling.[24]

Lear. Are you our daughter?

Gon. Come, sir;
I would you would make use of that good wisdom
Whereof I know you're fraught; and put away
These dispositions, which of late transform you
From what you rightly are.

Fool. May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse? — Whoop, Jug![25] I love thee.

Lear. Doth any here know me? — Why, this is not Lear: doth Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes? Either his notion weakens, or his discernings are lethargied.[26] Ha! waking? 'tis not so. — Who is it that can tell me who I am? —

Fool. Lear's shadow, —

Lear. — I would learn that; for, by the marks of sovereignty, — knowledge and reason, — I should be false persuaded I had daughters.[27] —

till they get so big and so voracious as to scare away or kill their feeder. So in *1 King Henry the Fourth*, v. 1: —

> And, being fed by us, you used us so
> As that ungentle gull, the cuckoo-bird,
> Useth the sparrow; did oppress our nest;
> Grew by our feeding to so great a bulk,
> That even our love durst not come near your sight
> For fear of swallowing.

[24] To be left *darkling* is to be left *in the dark*.

[25] It does not well appear what is the meaning or purpose of *Jug*. Perhaps it is used as a significant name. Ben Jonson has it as the name of one of his characters in *The New Inn*: "JUG, *the Tapster, a thoroughfare of news*."

[26] *Notion* and *discernings* are evidently meant here as equivalent terms. *Notion* for *mind*, *judgment*, or *understanding*, occurs repeatedly. So that the meaning is, "Either his mind is breaking down, or else it has fallen into a lethargy." See *Macbeth*, page 101, note 16.

[27] Here "marks of *sovereignty*," as I take it, are *sovereign* marks, and

Fool. — which they will make an obedient father.[28]

Lear. Your name, fair gentlewoman?

Gon. This admiration,[29] sir, is much o' the savour
Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you
To understand my purposes aright:
As you are old and reverend, you should be wise.
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;
Men so disorder'd, so debauch'd, and bold,
That this our Court, infected with their manners,
Shows like a riotous inn. The shame itself doth speak
For instant remedy: be, then, desired
By her, that else will take the thing she begs,
A little to disquantity your train;
And the remainder, that shall still depend,
To be such men as may besort your age,
Which know themselves and you.

Lear. Darkness and devils! —
Saddle my horses; call my train together. —
Degenerate bastard! I'll not trouble thee:
Yet have I left a daughter.

Gon. You strike my people; and your disorder'd rabble
Make servants of their betters.

Enter ALBANY.

Lear. Woe, that too late repents. — [*To* ALB.] O, sir, are you come?

knowledge and *reason* in apposition with *marks*. So that the meaning is, "For knowledge and reason, which are our supreme guides or attributes, would persuade me I had daughters, though such is clearly not the case."

[28] It must be understood, that in the speech beginning "I would learn that," Lear is continuing his former speech, and answering his own question, without heeding the Fool's interruption. So, again, in this speech the Fool continues his former one, *which* referring to *shadow*.

[29] *Admiration* in its Latin sense of *wonder*.

Is it your will? Speak, sir. — Prepare my horses. —
Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child
Than the sea-monster! [30]

Alb. Pray, sir, be patient.

Lear. [*To* GON.] Detested kite! thou liest:
My train are men of choice and rarest [31] parts,
That all particulars of duty know;
And in the most exact regard support
The worship [32] of their name. — O most small fault,
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!
Which, like an engine,[33] wrench'd my frame of nature
From the fix'd place, drew from my heart all love,
And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear, Lear!
Beat at this gate that let thy folly in, [*Striking his head.*
And thy dear judgment out! — Go, go, my people.

Alb. My lord, I'm guiltless, as I'm ignorant
Of what hath moved you.

Lear. It may be so, my lord. — Hear, Nature, hear!
Dear goddess, hear! suspend thy purpose, if
Thou didst intend to make this creature fruitful!
Dry up in her the organs of increase;

[30] Referring, probably, to the dreadful beast that made such havoc with the virgin daughters of old Troy. Alluded to again in *The Merchant*, iii. 2: "The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy to the *sea-monster*." The story is, that the King's daughter, Hesione, being demanded by the sea-monster, and being chained to a rock for his dinner, Hercules slew the beast, and delivered the lady.

[31] Here the superlative sense in *rarest* extends back over *choice*. We have a like instance in *Measure for Measure*, iv. 6: "The *generous* and *gravest* citizens." The usage was common.

[32] *Worship* was continually used just as *honour* is now, only meaning *less*. So "your *Worship*" was a lower title than "your *Honour*."

[33] *Engine* for *rack*, the old instrument of torture.

And from her derogate body never spring
A babe to honour her! If she must teem,
Create her child of spleen; that it may live,
And be a thwart disnatured torment to her!
Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth;
With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks;
Turn all her mother's pains and benefits
To laughter and contempt; that she may feel
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child! — Away, away![34] [*Exit.*

Alb. Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?

Gon. Never afflict yourself to know the cause;
But let his disposition have that scope
That dotage gives it.

Re-enter LEAR.

Lear. What, fifty of my followers, at a clap!
Within a fortnight!

Alb. What's the matter, sir?

Lear. I'll tell thee. — [*To* GON.] Life and death! I am ashamed
That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus;
That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,
Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon thee!
Th' untented woundings[35] of a father's curse,

[34] In Lear old age itself is a character; its natural imperfections being increased by life-long habits of receiving prompt obedience. Any addition of individuality would have been unnecessary and painful; for the relations of others to him, of wondrous fidelity and of frightful ingratitude, alone sufficiently distinguish him. Thus Lear becomes the open play-room of nature's passions. — COLERIDGE.

[35] The *untented* woundings are the *rankling* or *never-healing wounds* inflicted by parental malediction. To *tent* is to *probe: untented*, therefore, is *too deep to be probed.*

Pierce every sense about thee! — Old fond eyes,
Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck you out,
And cast you, with the waters that you lose,
To temper clay. — Ha, is it come to this?
Let it be so: I have another daughter,
Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable:[36]
When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails
She'll flay thy wolfish visage. Thou shalt find
That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think
I have cast off for ever; thou shalt, I warrant thee.

[*Exeunt* LEAR, KENT, *and* Attendants.

Gon. Do you mark that, my lord?[37]

Alb. I cannot be so partial, Goneril,
To the great love I bear you, —

Gon. Pray you, content. — What, Oswald, ho! —
[*To the* FOOL.] You, sir, more knave than fool, after your master.

Fool. Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear, tarry, and take the Fool with thee. —

A fox, when one has caught her,
And such a daughter,
Should sure to the slaughter,
If my cap would buy a halter:
So the Fool follows after. [*Exit.*

Gon. This man hath had good counsel: a hundred knights!
'Tis politic and safe to let him keep
At point[38] a hundred knights: yes, that, on every dream,

[36] *Comfortable* in an active sense, as *giving* comfort. Often so.

[37] Albany, though his heart is on the King's side, is reluctant to make a square issue with his wife; and she thinks to work upon him by calling his attention pointedly to Lear's threat of resuming the kingdom.

[38] *At point* is *completely armed*, and so ready on the slightest notice.

Each buz, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,
He may enguard his dotage with their powers,
And hold our lives in mercy. — Oswald, I say! —
Alb. Well, you may fear too far.[39]
Gon. Safer than trust too far:
Let me still take away the harms I fear,
Not fear still to be harm'd: I know his heart.
What he hath utter'd I have writ my sister:
If she sustain him and his hundred knights,
When I have show'd th' unfitness, —

Enter OSWALD.

How now, Oswald!
What, have ye writ that letter to my sister?
Osw. Ay, madam.
Gon. Take you some company, and away to horse:
Inform her full of my particular fear;
And thereto add such reasons of your own
As may compact it more.[40] So get you gone,
And hasten your return. [*Exit* OSWALD.] — No, no, my lord;
This milky gentleness and course[41] of yours,
Though I condemn it not, yet, under pardon,
You are much more attask'd[42] for want of wisdom
Than praised for harmful mildness.

[39] The monster Goneril prepares what is necessary, while the character of Albany renders a still more maddening grievance possible, namely, Regan and Cornwall in perfect sympathy of monstrosity. Not a sentiment, not an image, which can give pleasure on its own account, is admitted: whenever these creatures are introduced, and they are brought forward as little as possible, pure horror reigns throughout. — COLERIDGE.

[40] That is, make it more consistent and credible; *strengthen* it.

[41] "Milky and *gentle* course" is the meaning. See page 71, note 8.

[42] The word *task* is frequently used by Shakespeare and his contemporaries in the sense of *tax*. So in the common phrase of our time, "Taken to task"; that is, *called to account*, or *reproved*.

Alb. How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell:
Striving to better, oft we mar what's well.

Gon. Nay, then, —

Alb. Well, well; the event.[43] [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V. — *Court before the Same.*

Enter LEAR, KENT, *and the* FOOL.

Lear. Go you before to Gloster with these letters. Acquaint my daughter no further with any thing you know than comes from her demand out of the letter.[1] If your diligence be not speedy, I shall be there[2] afore you.

Kent. I will not sleep, my lord, till I have delivered your letter. [*Exit.*

Fool. If a man's brains were in's heels, were't not in danger of kibes?[3]

Lear. Ay, boy.

Fool. Then, I pr'ythee, be merry; thy wit shall not go slip-shod.[4]

[43] As before implied, Albany shrinks from a word-storm with his helpmate, and so tells her, in effect, "Well, let us not quarrel about it, but wait and see how your course works."

[1] This instruction to Kent is very well-judged. The old King feels mortified at what has happened, and does not want Kent to volunteer any information about it to his other daughter.

[2] The word *there* shows that when the King says, "Go you before to *Gloster*," he means the town of Gloster, which Shakespeare chose to make the residence of the Duke of Cornwall, to increase the probability of his setting out late from thence on a visit to the Earl of Gloster. The old English earls usually resided in the counties from whence they took their titles. Lear, not finding his son-in-law and daughter at home, follows them to the Earl of Gloster's castle.

[3] *Kibe* is an old name for a common heel-sore. In *The Tempest*, ii. 1, Antonio says of his conscience, "if 'twere a *kibe*, 'twould put me to my slipper."

[4] I do not well see the force or application of this. Perhaps it is, "Thy

Lear. Ha, ha, ha!

Fool. Shalt see, thy other daughter will use thee kindly;[5] for though she's as like this as a crab is like an apple,[6] yet I can tell what I can tell.

Lear. What canst tell, boy?

Fool. She will taste as like this as a crab does to a crab. Thou canst tell why one's nose stands i' the middle on's face?

Lear. No.

Fool. Why, to keep one's eyes of[7] either side's nose; that what a man cannot smell out, he may spy into.

Lear. I did her wrong,[8] —

Fool. Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

Lear. No.

Fool. Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house.

Lear. Why?

Fool. Why, to put his head in; not to give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns without a case.

Lear. I will forget my nature. So kind a father! — Be my horses ready?

Fool. Thy asses are gone about 'em. The reason why the seven stars[9] are no more than seven is a pretty reason.

wit is not in thy heels, and therefore will have no need of slippers"; referring to what the King has just said, — "I shall be there afore you."

[5] The Fool quibbles, using *kindly* in two senses; as it means *affectionately*, and like the rest of her *kind*, or according to her *nature*. The Poet often uses *kind* and its derivatives in this sense. See *Hamlet*, page 59, note 18.

[6] *Crab* refers to the fruit so called, not to the fish. So in Lyly's *Euphues*: "The sower Crabbe hath the shew of an Apple as well as the sweet Pippin."

[7] Shakespeare often has *of* where we should use *on*, and *vice versa*; as *on's* in the Fool's preceding speech. See *Hamlet*, page 108, note 38.

[8] Lear is now stung with remorse for his treatment of Cordelia.

[9] "The seven stars" are the constellation called the Pleiades.

Lear. Because they are not eight?

Fool. Yes, indeed: thou wouldst make a good Fool.

Lear. To take't again perforce![10] — Monster ingratitude!

Fool. If thou wert my Fool, nuncle, I'd have thee beaten for being old before thy time.

Lear. How's that?

Fool. Thou shouldst not have been old before thou hadst been wise.

Lear. O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet Heaven! Keep me in temper: I would not be mad![11] —

Enter a Gentleman.

How now! Are the horses ready?

Gent. Ready, my lord.

Lear. Come, boy. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I. — *A Court in* GLOSTER'S *Castle.*

Enter EDMUND *and* CURAN, *meeting.*

Edm. Save thee, Curan.

Cur. And you, sir. I have been with your father, and given him notice that the Duke of Cornwall and Regan his Duchess will be here with him this night.

Edm. How comes that?

[10] He is meditating on what he has before threatened, namely, to "resume the shape which he has cast off."

[11] The mind's own anticipation of madness! The deepest tragic notes are often struck by a half-sense of the impending blow. — COLERIDGE.

Cur. Nay, I know not. You have heard of the news abroad? I mean the whisper'd ones, for they are yet but ear-kissing arguments.[1]

Edm. Not I: pray you, what are they?

Cur. Have you heard of no likely wars toward[2] 'twixt the Dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

Edm. Not a word.

Cur. You may do, then, in time. Fare you well, sir.

[*Exit.*

Edm. The Duke be here to-night? The better! best!
This weaves itself perforce into my business.
My father hath set guard to take my brother;
And I have one thing, of a queasy question,[3]
Which I must act: briefness and fortune, work! —
Brother, a word; — descend: — brother, I say!

Enter EDGAR.

My father watches: O sir, fly this place;
Intelligence is given where you are hid:
You've now the good advantage of the night.
Have you not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall?
He's coming hither; now, i' the night, i' the haste,
And Regan with him: have you nothing said
Upon his party 'gainst the Duke of Albany?[4]
Advise yourself.

Edg. I'm sure on't, not a word.

[1] "*Ear-kissing* arguments" are words spoken with the speaker's lips close to the hearer's ear, as if kissing him; *whispers.*

[2] *Toward* is *forthcoming* or *at hand.* See *Hamlet*, page 231, note 66.

[3] "A *queasy* question" is a matter delicate, ticklish, or difficult to manage; as a queasy stomach is impatient of motion.

[4] The meaning is, "Have you said nothing *in censure or reproof of* the party he has formed against the Duke of Albany?" — *Advise*, in the next line, is *consider, reflect.*

Edm. I hear my father coming: pardon me;
In cunning I must draw my sword upon you:
Draw; seem to defend yourself: now, quit you[5] well. —
Yield; come before my father. — Light, ho, here! —
Fly, brother. — Torches, torches! — So, farewell. —
[*Exit* EDGAR.
Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion
Of my more fierce endeavour: [*Wounds his arm.*
I've seen drunkards
Do more than this in sport.[6] — Father, father! —
Stop, stop! — No help?

Enter GLOSTER, *and* Servants *with Torches.*

Glos. Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

Edm. Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword out,
Mumbling of wicked charms, cónjuring the Moon
To stand auspicious mistress.[7]

Glos. But where is he?

Edm. Look, sir, I bleed.

Glos. Where is the villain, Edmund?

Edm. Fled this way, sir. When by no means he could —

Glos. Pursue him, ho! — Go after. —
[*Exeunt some* Servants.
By no means what?

Edm. Persuade me to the murder of your lordship;
But that I told him the revenging gods
'Gainst parricides did all their thunders bend;

[5] *Quit you* is *acquit yourself.* The Poet has *quit* repeatedly so.

[6] These drunken feats are mentioned in Marston's *Dutch Courtezan:* "Have I not been drunk for your health, eat glasses, drunk wine, *stabbed arms*, and done all offices of protested gallantry for your sake?"

[7] Gloster has already shown himself a believer in such astrological superstitions; so that Edmund here takes hold of him by just the right handle.

Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond
The child was bound to th' father: sir, in fine,
Seeing how lothly opposite I stood
To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion,
With his preparèd sword he charges home
My unprovided body, lanced mine arm:
But, whêr he saw my best alarum'd spirits
Bold in the quarrel's right, roused to th' encounter,
Or whether gasted [8] by the noise I made,
Full suddenly he fled.

Glos. Let him fly far:
Not in this land shall he remain uncaught;
And, found, dispatch. The noble Duke my master,
My worthy arch [9] and patron, comes to-night:
By his authority I will proclaim it,
That he which finds him shall deserve our thanks,
Bringing the murderous coward to the stake;
He that conceals him, death.

Edm. When I dissuaded him from his intent,
And found him pight to do it, with curst speech [10]
I threaten'd to discover him. He replied,
Thou unpossessing bastard! dost thou think,
If I would stand against thee, could the reposure
Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee
Make thy words faith'd? No: what I should deny,—
As this I would; ay, though thou didst produce

[8] That is, *aghasted, frighted.* So in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Wit at Several Weapons:* "Either the sight of the lady has *gasted* him, or else he's drunk."

[9] *Arch* is *chief;* still used in composition, as *arch-angel, arch-duke,* &c.

[10] *Pight* is *pitched, fixed; curst* is an epithet applied to any bad quality in excess; as a malignant, quarrelsome, or scolding temper. So in *The Taming of the Shrew,* Catharine is called "a *curst* shrew."

My very character,[11] — *I'd turn it all*
To thy suggestion, plot, and damnèd practice:
And thou must make a dullard of the world,
If they not thought the profits of my death
Were very pregnant and potential spurs
To make thee seek it.

Glos. Strong and fasten'd[12] villain!
Would he deny his letter? I never got him. [*Tucket within.*
Hark, the Duke's trumpets! I know not why he comes.
All ports I'll bar; the villain shall not 'scape;
The Duke must grant me that: besides, his picture
I will send far and near, that all the kingdom
May have due note of him; and of my land,
Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means
To make thee capable.[13]

Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, *and* Attendants.

Corn. How now, my noble friend! since I came hither, —
Which I can call but now, — I've heard strange news.

Reg. If it be true, all vengeance comes too short
Which can pursue th' offender. How dost, my lord?

Glos. O madam, my old heart is crack'd, it's crack'd!

Reg. What, did my father's godson seek your life?
He whom my father named? your Edgar?[14]

[11] *Character* here means *hand-writing* or *signature.*

[12] *Strong and fasten'd* is *resolute and confirmed.* Strong was often used in a bad sense, as *strong* thief, *strong* traitor.

[13] That is, capable of succeeding to his estate. By law, Edmund was incapable of the inheritance. The word *natural* is here used with great art in the double sense of *illegitimate* and as opposed to *unnatural*, which latter epithet is implied upon Edgar.

[14] There is a peculiar subtlety and intensity of malice in these speeches of Regan. Coleridge justly observes that she makes "no reference to the guilt, but only to the accident, which she uses as an occasion for sneering

Glos. O lady, lady, shame would have it hid!

Reg. Was he not companion with the riotous knights
That tend upon my father?

Glos. I know not, madam: 'tis too bad, too bad.

Edm. Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

Reg. No marvel, then, though he were ill affected:
'Tis they have put him on the old man's death,
To have the waste and spoil of his revenues.
I have this present evening from my sister
Been well inform'd of them; and with such cautions,
That, if they come to sojourn at my house,
I'll not be there.

Corn. Nor I, assure thee, Regan. —
Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father
A child-like office.

Edm. 'Twas my duty, sir.

Glos. He did bewray[15] his practice; and received
This hurt you see, striving to apprehend him.

Corn. Is he pursued?

Glos. Ay, my good lord.

Corn. If he be taken, he shall never more
Be fear'd of doing harm: make your own purpose,
How in my strength you please. — For you, Edmund,
Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant
So much commend itself, you shall be ours:
Natures of such deep trust we shall much need;
You we first seize on.

Edm. I shall serve you, sir,

at her father." And he adds, "Regan is not, in fact, a greater monster than Goneril, but she has the power of casting more venom."

[15] *Bewray* is nearly the same in sense as *betray*, and means *disclose* or *reveal*. So in St. Matthew, xxvi. 73: "Thy speech *bewrayeth* thee."

Truly, however else.

Glos. For him I thank your Grace.

Corn. You know not why we came to visit you, —

Reg. Thus out of season, threading[16] dark-eyed night:
Occasions, noble Gloster, of some poise,[17]
Wherein we must have use of your advice.
Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,
Of differences, which I best thought it fit
To answer from our home:[18] the several messengers
From hence attend dispatch. Our good old friend,
Lay comforts to your bosom; and bestow
Your needful counsel to our business,
Which craves the instant use.

Glos. I serve you, madam:
Your Graces are right welcome. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. — *Before* GLOSTER'S *Castle.*

Enter KENT *and* OSWALD, *severally.*

Osw. Good dawning to thee, friend:[1] art of this house?

Kent. Ay.

Osw. Where may we set our horses?

Kent. I' the mire.

Osw. Pr'ythee, if thou lovest me, tell me.

16 *Threading* is *passing through.* The word *dark-eyed* shows that an allusion to the threading of a needle was intended.

17 *Poise* is *weight, importance.* — Regan's snatching the speech out of her husband's mouth is rightly in character. These two strong-minded ladies think nobody else can do any thing so well as they.

18 That is, *away* from our home; from some other place than home.

1 *Dawning* occurs again in *Cymbeline*, as substantive, for *morning.* It is still so dark, however, that Oswald does not recognize Kent. Kent probably knows him by the voice.

Kent. I love thee not.

Osw. Why, then I care not for thee.

Kent. If I had thee in Finsbury pinfold,[2] I would make thee care for me.

Osw. Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not.

Kent. Fellow, I know thee.

Osw. What dost thou know me for?

Kent. A knave; a rascal; an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy, worsted-stocking knave; a lily-liver'd, action-taking, whoreson, glass-gazing, superserviceable, finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one whom I will beat into clamorous whining, if thou deniest the least syllable of thy addition.[3]

Osw. Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou, thus to rail on one that is neither known of thee nor knows thee.

Kent. What a brazen-faced varlet art thou, to deny thou knowest me? Is it two days since I tripp'd up thy heels, and beat thee, before the King? Draw, you rogue: for, though it be night, yet the Moon shines; I'll make a sop

[2] *Pinfold* is an old word for *pound*, a public enclosure where stray pigs and cattle are shut up, to be bought out by the owner.

[3] *Addition*, again, for *title*, but here put for the foregoing string of titles. A few of these may need to be explained. "*Three-suited* knave" probably means one who spends all he has, or his whole income, in dress. Kent afterwards says to Oswald, "a *tailor made* thee." So in Jonson's *Silent Woman:* "Wert a pitiful fellow, and hadst nothing but *three suits* of apparel." "Worsted-stocking knave" is another reproach of the same kind. "Action-taking" is one who, if you beat him, would bring an action for assault, instead of resenting it like a man of pluck. "One-trunk-inheriting," — *inherit* in its old sense of to *own* or *possess*. *Superserviceable* is about the same as *servile;* one that *overdoes* his service; *sycophantic*. *Lily-liver'd* was a common epithet for a *coward*. See *Macbeth*, page 153, note 5.

o' the moonshine of you.[4] [*Drawing his sword.*] Draw, you whoreson cullionly barber-monger,[5] draw.

Osw. Away! I have nothing to do with thee.

Kent. Draw, you rascal: you come with letters against the King, and take Vanity the puppet's part[6] against the royalty of her father. Draw, you rogue, or I'll so carbonado[7] your shanks: draw, you rascal; come your ways.

Osw. Help, ho! murder! help!

Kent. Strike, you slave! stand, rogue, stand; you neat slave,[8] strike! [*Beating him.*

Osw. Help, ho! murder! murder!

Enter EDMUND, *Sword in hand.*

Edm. How now! What's the matter? [*Parting them.*

Kent. With you, goodman boy,[9] if you please: come, I'll flesh ye;[10] come on, young master.

[4] An equivoque is here intended, by an allusion to the old dish of *eggs in moonshine*, which was eggs broken and boiled in salad oil till the yolks became hard. It is equivalent to the phrase of modern times, "I'll *baste you*," or "*beat you to a mummy*."

[5] Called *barber-monger* because he spends so much time in nursing his whiskers, in getting himself up, and in being barbered.

[6] Alluding, probably, to the old moral-plays, in which the virtues and vices were personified. Of course Vanity was represented as a female; and *puppet* was often used as a term of contempt for a woman. Jonson, in *The Devil is an Ass*, speaks of certain vices as "Lady Vanity" and "Old Iniquity."

[7] To *carbonado* is to *slash with stripes*, as a piece of meat to be cooked.

[8] Steevens thought that *neat slave* might mean, "you *finical* rascal, you assemblage of *foppery* and *poverty*." Walker, a better authority, explains it, "*Neat* in the sense of *pure, unmixed;* still used in the phrase *neat wine*." This makes it equivalent to "you *unmitigated villain*."

[9] Kent purposely takes Edmund's *matter* in the sense of *quarrel*, and means, "I'll fight with you, if you wish it." — *Goodman*, in old usage, is about the same as *master* or *mister*. With *boy*, it is contemptuous. The word occurs repeatedly in the Bible; as "the *goodman* of the house."

[10] To *flesh* one is to give him his first trial in fighting, or to put him to the

Enter GLOSTER.

Glos. Weapons! arms! what's the matter here?

Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, *and* Servants.

Corn. Keep peace, upon your lives;
He dies that strikes again. What is the matter?

Reg. The messengers from our sister and the King.

Corn. What is your difference? speak.

Osw. I am scarce in breath, my lord.

Kent. No marvel, you have so bestirr'd your valour. You cowardly rascal, Nature disclaims in thee:[11] a tailor made thee.

Corn. Thou art a strange fellow: a tailor make a man?

Kent. Ay, a tailor, sir: a stone-cutter[12] or a painter could not have made him so ill, though they had been but two hours at the trade.

Corn. Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

Osw. This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spared at suit of his gray beard,—

Kent. Thou zed! thou unnecessary letter![13]—My lord,

first proof of his valour. So in *1 King Henry IV.*, v. 4: "Full bravely hast thou *fleshed* thy *maiden* sword." A man is also said to be fleshed when he has tasted success, and is elated or encouraged thereby; *flushed*, as we say.

[11] That is, "Nature *disowns* thee." To *disclaim in* was often used for to *disclaim* simply. Bacon has it so in his *Advancement of Learning*.—It would seem, from this passage, that Oswald is one whose "soul is in his clothes." Hence fond of being barbered and curled and made fine; and hence naturally provoking some of the opprobrious terms explained in note 3.

[12] *Stone-cutter* for *sculptor*, or an artist in marble.

[13] *Zed* is here used as a term of contempt, because Z is the last letter in the English alphabet: it is said to be an unnecessary letter, because its place may be supplied by S. Ben Jonson, in his *English Grammar*, says, "Z is a letter often heard among us, but seldom seen."

if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted [14] villain
into mortar. — Spare my gray beard, you wagtail? [15]

Corn. Peace, sirrah!
You beastly knave, know you no reverence?

Kent. Yes, sir; but anger hath a privilege.

Corn. Why art thou angry?

Kent. That such a slave as this should wear a sword,
Who wears no honesty. Such smiling rogues as these,
Like rats, oft bite the holy cords a-twain
Which are too intrinse t' unloose; [16] smooth every passion
That in the natures of their lords rebel; [17]
Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods;
Reneag, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks
With every gale [18] and vary of their masters,
As knowing nought, like dogs, but following. —
A plague upon your epileptic visage! [19]
Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool?

[14] *Unbolted* is *unsifted*, hence *coarse*. The Poet has *bolted* repeatedly in the opposite sense of *refined* or *pure*.

[15] *Wagtail*, I take it, comes pretty near meaning *puppy*.

[16] The image is of a knot so *intricate*, or so closely tied, that it cannot be untied. The Poet uses *intrinsicate* as another form of *intrinse*, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, v. 2: "With thy sharp teeth this knot *intrinsicate* of life at once untie."

[17] To *smooth* is, here, to *cosset* or *flatter;* a common usage in the Poet's time. — *Rebel* is here used as agreeing with the nearest substantive, instead of with the proper subject, *That;* a thing very common at the time. See *Hamlet*, page 57, note 12.

[18] *Reneag* is *renounce* or *deny*. So in *Antony and Cleopatra*, i. 1: "His captain's heart *reneags* all temper." It is commonly spelt *renege*, and sometimes *reneg*. — The *halcyon* is a bird called the kingfisher, which, when dried and hung up by a thread, was supposed to turn its bill towards the point whence the wind blew. So in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta:* "But now how stands the wind? into what corner peers my halcyon's bill?"

[19] A visage distorted by grinning, as the next line shows.

Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain,
I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot.[20]

Corn. What, art thou mad, old fellow?

Glos. How fell you out? say that.

Kent. No contraries hold more antipathy
Than I and such a knave.[21]

Corn. Why dost thou call him knave? What's his offence?

Kent. His countenance likes me not.

Corn. No more, perchance, does mine, nor his, nor hers.

Kent. Sir, 'tis my occupation to be plain:
I have seen better faces in my time
Than stands on any shoulder that I see
Before me at this instant.

Corn. This is some fellow,
Who, having been praised for bluntness, doth affect
A saucy roughness, and constrains the garb,
Quite from his nature: [22] he cannot flatter, he;
An honest mind and plain, he must speak truth!

[20] *Sarum* is an old contraction of *Salisbury*. Salisbury plain is the largest piece of flat surface in England, and used to be much noted as a lonely and desolate region. — *Camelot* is said to be a place in Somersetshire where large numbers of geese were bred. Old romances also make it the place where King Arthur kept his Court in the West. "Here, therefore," says Dyce, "there is perhaps a double allusion, — to Camelot as famous for its geese, and to those knights who were vanquished by the Knights of the Round Table being sent to Camelot to yield themselves as vassals to King Arthur."

[21] The Steward should be placed in exact antithesis to Kent, as the only character of utter irredeemable baseness in Shakespeare. Even in this the judgment and invention of the Poet are very observable: for what else could the willing tool of a Goneril be? Not a vice but this of baseness was left open to him. — COLERIDGE.

[22] Forces his outside, or his appearance, to something totally *different* from his natural disposition. — *Garb* is used repeatedly by Shakespeare in the sense of *style* or *manner*.

An they will take it, so ; if not, he's plain.
These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness
Harbour more craft and more corrupter ends
Than twenty silly-ducking observants
That stretch their duties nicely.[23]

Kent. Sir, in good sooth, in sincere verity,
Under th' allowance of your great aspect,
Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire
On flickering Phœbus' front,—

Corn. What mean'st by this?

Kent. To go out of my dialect, which you discommend so much. I know, sir, I am no flatterer: he that beguiled you in a plain accent was a plain knave ; which, for my part, I will not be, though I should win your displeasure to entreat me to't.

Corn. What was the offence you gave him?

Osw. I never gave him any.
It pleased the King his master very late
To strike at me, upon his misconstruction ;
When he, conjunct, and flattering his displeasure,
Tripp'd me behind ; being down, insulted, railed,
And put upon him such a deal of man,
That worthied him, got praises of the King
For him attempting who was self-subdued ;[24]

[23] *Nicely* is *punctiliously*, with *over-strained nicety*. — Coleridge has a just remark upon this speech: "In thus placing these profound general truths in the mouths of such men as Cornwall, Edmund, Iago, &c., Shakespeare at once gives them utterance, and yet shows how indefinite their application is." I may add, that an inferior dramatist, instead of making his villains use any such vein of original and profound remark, would probably fill their mouths with something either shocking or absurd; which is just what real villains, if they have any wit, never do.

[24] By "him who was self-subdued," Oswald means himself, pretending that the poor figure he made was the result of virtuous self-control, and not

And, in the fleshment of this dread exploit,
Drew on me here again.

Kent. None of these rogues and cowards
But Ajax is their fool.[25]

Corn. Fetch forth the stocks! —
You stubborn ancient knave, you reverend braggart,
We'll teach you —

Kent. Sir, I am too old to learn:
Call not your stocks for me: I serve the King;
On whose employment I was sent to you:
You shall do small respect, show too bold malice
Against the grace and person of my master,
Stocking his messenger.

Corn. Fetch forth the stocks! — As I have life and honour,
There shall he sit till noon.

Reg. Till noon! till night, my lord; and all night too.

Kent. Why, madam, if I were your father's dog,
You should not use me so.

Reg. Sir, being his knave, I will.

Corn. This is a fellow of the self-same colour
Our sister speaks of. — Come, bring away the stocks!

[*Stocks brought out.*

Glos. Let me beseech your Grace not to do so:
His fault is much, and the good King his master
Will check him for't: your purposed low correction
Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches

of imbecility or fear. — *Fleshment* here means *pride* or *elation;* as explained in note 10 of this scene.

[25] Ajax is a fool to them. "These rogues and cowards talk in such a boasting strain that, if we were to credit their account of themselves, Ajax would appear a person of no prowess when *compared* to them."

For pilferings and most common trespasses
Are punish'd with. The King must take it ill,
That he, so slightly valued in his messenger,
Should have him thus restrain'd.

Corn. I'll answer that.

Reg. My sister may receive it much more worse,
To have her gentleman abused, assaulted,
For following her affairs. — Put in his legs. —

[KENT *is put in the stocks.*

Come, my good lord, away.

[*Exeunt all but* GLOSTER *and* KENT.

Glos. I'm sorry for thee, friend; 'tis the Duke's pleasure,
Whose disposition, all the world well knows,
Will not be rubb'd[26] nor stopp'd: I will entreat for thee.

Kent. Pray, do not, sir: I've watch'd, and travell'd hard;
Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle.
A good man's fortune may grow out at heels:[27]
Give you good morrow!

Glos. The Duke's to blame in this; 'twill be ill taken.

[*Exit.*

Kent. Good King, that must approve[28] the common saw, —
Thou out of Heaven's benediction comest
To the warm sun![29] —

[26] *Rubb'd* is *impeded* or *hindered*. So in Hamlet's well-known phrase, "Ay, there's the *rub*." A rub in a bowling-alley is something that obstructs or deflects the ball.

[27] A man set in the stocks was said to be "punished by the heels"; and Kent probably alludes to this. He also means, apparently, that the fortune even of a good man may have holes in the heels of its shoes; or, as we say, may be "out at the toes," or "out at the elbows."

[28] Here, again, to *approve* is to *make good*, to *prove true*, to *confirm*. See page 63, note 37.

[29] The *saw*, that is, the *saying* or *proverb*, alluded to is, "Out of God's

Approach, thou beacon to this under globe,
That by thy comfortable beams I may
Peruse this letter! — Nothing, almost, sees miracles
But misery.[30] I know 'tis from Cordelia;
Who hath most fortunately been inform'd
Of my obscurèd course; and shall find time,
From this enormous state, seeking, to give
Losses their remedies.[31] — All weary and o'erwatch'd,

blessing into the warm sun"; which was used to signify the state of one cast out from the comforts and charities of home, and left exposed to the social inclemencies of the world. The proverbial phrase is well illustrated by a passage in Wilson's *Arte of Rhetoric*, 1585: "Undoubtedly the lawyer never dyeth a beggar; and no marvail. For an hundred begger for him, and make away all that they have, to get that of him, the which the oftener he bestoweth the more still he getteth. So that he gaineth always, as wel by increase of learning as by storing his purse with money; whereas the other *get a warm sun* often-times, and a flap with a fox-tail for all that ever they have spent." Lyly, in his *Euphues*, has an apt instance of the proverb reversed: "Therefore, if thou wilt follow my advice, and prosecute thine owne determination, thou shalt come out of a warme Sunne into God's blessing." For the foregoing explanation I am indebted, immediately, to Mr. Joseph Crosby, of Zanesville, Ohio.

[30] That is, hardly any but the miserable see miracles. Here *see* probably means *experience*, — a sense in which it is often used. Kent appears to be thinking of the supernatural cures and acts of beneficence recorded in the Gospels, where indeed miracles are almost never wrought but in behalf of the wretched; and upon this thought he seems to be building a hope of better times, both for himself and the old King; while, on the other hand, nothing short of a miraculous providence seems able to turn their course of misfortune.

[31] I here adopt the arrangement and explanation proposed to me by Mr. Joseph Crosby. The verbs *know* and *shall find* are in the same construction: "I know, and I shall find." *Enormous* is used in its proper Latin sense of *abnormal, anomalous*, or *out of rule;* and refers to Kent's own situation, his "obscurèd course." So, in the Shakespeare portion of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, v. 1, Mars is addressed, — "O great corrector of *enormous* times, shaker of o'er-rank States!" So that the meaning comes thus: "From this anomalous state of mine, I shall gain time to communicate and

Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold
This shameful lodging. —
Fortune, good night: smile once more; turn thy wheel![32]

[*He sleeps.*

SCENE III. — *The open Country.*

Enter EDGAR.

Edg. I heard myself proclaim'd;
And by the happy[1] hollow of a tree
Escaped the hunt. No port is free; no place,
That guard, and most unusual vigilance,
Does not attend my taking. While I may 'scape,
I will preserve myself; and am bethought

co-operate with Cordelia in her endeavour to restore the kingdom to its former condition; 'to give losses their remedies,' that is, to reinstate Lear on the throne, Cordelia in his favour, and myself in his confidence, and in my own rights and titles." All this Kent utters in a disjointed way, because half-asleep; and then, having viewed the situation as hopefully as he can, he puts up a prayer to Fortune, and drops off to sleep.

[32] I suspect Professor Dowden rather overstrains Kent's faith in Fortune; nevertheless I like his remarks: "Kent's loyalty to right has something in it of a desperate instinct, which persists in spite of the appearances presented by the world. Kent, who has seen the vicissitude of things, knows of no higher power presiding over the events of the world than fortune. Therefore, all the more, he clings to the passionate instinct of right-doing, and to the hardy temper, the fortitude which makes evil, when it happens to come, endurable. It is Kent who utters his thought in the words, 'Nothing, almost, sees miracles but misery.' And the miracle he sees, in his distress, is the approaching succour from France, and the loyalty of Cordelia's spirit. It is Kent, again, who, characteristically making the best of an unlucky chance, exclaims, as he settles himself to sleep in the stocks, 'Fortune, good night: smile once more; turn thy wheel.' Accordingly there is an exquisite tenderness in Kent's nature, and also a certain roughness and hardness, needful to protect, from the shocks of life, the tenderness of one who finds no refuge in communion with the higher powers."

[1] Here, as often, *happy* is *propitious* or *lucky;* like the Latin *felix*.

To take the basest and most poorest shape
That ever penury, in contempt of man,
Brought near to beast: my face I'll grime with filth,
Blanket my loins, elf all my hair in knots;[2]
And with presented nakedness outface
The winds and persecutions of the sky.
The country gives me proof and precedent
Of Bedlam beggars,[3] who, with roaring voices,
Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms
Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;
And with this horrible object, from low farms,
Poor pelting[4] villages, sheep cotes, and mills,
Sometime with lunatic bans,[5] sometime with prayers,
Enforce their charity. *Poor Turlygood!*[6] *Poor Tom!*
That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am.

[2] The entangling and knotting of the hair was supposed to be done by elves and fairies in the night; hence called *elf knots*.

[3] In *The Bell-Man of London*, by Dekker, 1640, is an account of one of these characters, under the title of *Abraham Man*. "He sweares he hath been in Bedlam, and will talke frantickely of purpose: you see *pinnes* stuck in sundry places of his naked flesh, especially in his *armes*, which paine he gladly puts himselfe to, only to make you believe he is out of his wits. He calls himselfe by the name of *Poore Tom*, and, coming near any body, cries out, *Poor Tom is a-cold*."

[4] *Pelting* is *paltry* or *insignificant*. See *Richard II.*, page 70, note 10.

[5] *Bans* is *curses*. The Poet had no doubt often seen such lunatics roving about in obscure places, and extorting pittances here and there, sometimes by loud execrations, sometimes by petitionary whinings.

[6] *Turlygood* appears to have been a corruption of *Turlupin*, a name applied to a fanatical sect that overran France, Italy, and Germany in the 13th and 14th centuries. "Their manners and appearance," says Douce, "exhibited the strongest indications of lunacy and distraction. The common people called them Turlupins. Their subsequent appellation of the fraternity of poor men might have been the cause why the wandering rogues called Bedlam beggars, one of whom Edgar personates, assumed or obtained the title of *Turlupins* or *Turlygoods*."

SCENE IV. — *Before* GLOSTER'S *Castle.* KENT *in the Stocks.*

Enter LEAR, *the* FOOL, *and a* Gentleman.

Lear. 'Tis strange that they should so depart from home,
And not send back my messenger.

Gent. As I learn'd,
The night before there was no purpose in them
Of this remove.

Kent. Hail to thee, noble master!

Lear. Ha!
Makest thou this shame thy pastime?

Kent. No, my lord.

Fool. Ha, ha! he wears cruel[1] garters. Horses are tied by the head, dogs and bears by the neck, monkeys by the loins, and men by the legs: when a man's over-lusty at legs, then he wears wooden nether-stocks.[2]

Lear. What's he that hath so much thy place mistook
To set thee here?

Kent. It is both he and she;
Your son and daughter.

Lear. No.

Kent. Yes.

Lear. No, I say.

Kent. I say, yea.

Lear. No, no, they would not.

Kent. Yes, they have.

Lear. By Jupiter, I swear, no.

Kent. By Juno, I swear, ay.

Lear. They durst not do't;

[1] A quibble between *cruel* and *crewel;* the latter being worsted.

[2] *Nether-stocks* is the old word for what we call *stockings.*

They could not, would not do't: 'tis worse than murder,
To do upon respect[3] such violent outrage.
Resolve me,[4] with all modest haste, which way
Thou mightst deserve, or they impose, this usage,
Coming from us.

Kent. My lord, when at their home
I did commend your Highness' letters to them,
Ere I was risen from the place that show'd
My duty kneeling, came there a reeking post,
Stew'd in his haste, half breathless, panting forth
From Goneril his mistress salutations;
Deliver'd letters, spite of intermission,[5]
Which presently they read: on whose contents,[6]
They summon'd up their meiny,[7] straight took horse;
Commanded me to follow, and attend
The leisure of their answer; gave me cold looks:
And, meeting here the other messenger,
Whose welcome, I perceived, had poison'd mine,
(Being the very fellow that of late
Display'd so saucily against your Highness,)

[3] The meaning probably is, to do *deliberately*, or upon *consideration*. *Respect*, with that sense, occurs in the first scene of this play, and such was the common meaning. Mr. Crosby, however, thinks the meaning here is, "to do outrage to the respect that is due to the King." And he adds, "*Respect* is a sort of semi-personification, and stands for that which commands respect, namely, the King, as represented in his messenger."

[4] "*Resolve* me" is *inform* me or *assure* me. A frequent usage.

[5] That is, *in* spite of the *interruption* or *delay* naturally consequent upon what Kent was himself doing. In other words, the "reeking post" did not heed Kent's action at all, nor allow himself to be interrupted by it. *Intermission* occurs both in *The Merchant* and in *Macbeth* for *pause* or *delay*, which is nearly its meaning here.

[6] "On *reading* the contents *of which*" is the meaning.

[7] *Meiny* is from a French word meaning *household*, or *retinue*.

Having more man than wit about me, drew:[8]
He raised the house with loud and coward cries.
Your son and daughter found this trespass worth
The shame which here it suffers.

Fool. Winter's not gone yet, if the wild geese fly that way.[9]

Fathers that wear rags
Do make their children blind;
But fathers that bear bags
Shall see their children kind. —

But, for all this, thou shalt have as many dolours[10] for thy daughters as thou canst tell in a year.

Lear. O, how this mother[11] swells up toward my heart!
Hysterica passio, down, thou climbing sorrow,
Thy element's below! — Where is this daughter?

Kent. With the Earl, sir, here within.

Lear. Follow me not; stay here. [*Exit.*

Gent. Made you no more offence but what you speak of?

Kent. None.
How chance the King comes with so small a train?

Fool. An thou hadst been set i' the stocks for that question, thou hadst well deserved it.

Kent. Why, Fool?

Fool. We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee there's no labouring i' the Winter.[12] All that follow their

[8] The pronoun *I* is understood here from the fourth line above.

[9] "If such is their behaviour, the King's troubles are not over yet."

[10] A quibble between *dolours* and *dollars*. — *Tell*, in the next line, is *count*, and refers to *dollars*. See *Macbeth*, page 59, note 23.

[11] Lear affects to pass off the swelling of his heart, ready to burst with grief and indignation, for the disease called the *mother*, or *hysterica passio*, which, in the Poet's time, was not thought peculiar to women.

[12] Referring to Proverbs, vi. 6–8: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the Summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." And the

noses are led by their eyes but blind men ; and there's not a nose among twenty but can smell him that's stinking.[13] Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill, lest it break thy neck with following it ; but the great one that goes up the hill, let him draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better counsel, give me mine again : I would have none but knaves follow it, since a fool gives it.

That sir which serves and seeks for gain,
And follows but for form,
Will pack when it begins to rain,
And leave thee in the storm.
But I will tarry ; the Fool will stay,
And let the wise man fly :
The knave turns fool that runs away,
The Fool no knave, perdy.[14]

Kent. Where learn'd you this, Fool?

Fool. Not i' the stocks, fool.

Re-enter LEAR, *with* GLOSTER.

Lear. Deny to speak with me? They're sick? they're weary?
They've travell'd hard to-night? Mere fetches ;[15]

application is, "If you had learned of the ant, you would have known that the King's train are too shrewd to be making hay in cloudy weather, or to think of providing their meat where the Winter of adversity has set in."

[13] All but blind men are led by their eyes, though they follow their noses ; and these, seeing the King's forlorn condition, have forsaken him ; while even of the blind, who have nothing but their noses to guide them, there is not one in twenty but can smell him who, being "muddy in Fortune's mood, smells somewhat strong of her displeasure."

[14] Here the Fool may be using the trick of suggesting a thing by saying its opposite. Or perhaps he is playing upon the two senses of *knave*, one of which is *servant*. This would infer who the real fools in the world are. Coleridge says "a knave is a fool with a circumbendibus."

[15] *Fetch* was often used for *device*, *pretext*, or *stratagem*.

The images of revolt and flying off.
Fetch me a better answer.
Glos. My dear lord,
You know the fiery quality of the Duke;
How unremovable and fix'd he is
In his own course.
Lear. Vengeance! plague! death! confusion!—
Fiery? what quality? Why, Gloster, Gloster,
I'd speak wi' th'[16] Duke of Cornwall and his wife.
Glos. Well, my good lord, I have inform'd them so.
Lear. Inform'd them! Dost thou understand me, man?
Glos. Ay, my good lord.
Lear. The King would speak with Cornwall; the dear father
Would with his daughter speak; commands her service:[17]
Are they inform'd of this? — My breath and blood!
Fiery? the fiery Duke? Tell the hot Duke that —
No, but not yet: may be he is not well:
Infirmity doth still neglect all office
Whereto our health is bound; we're not ourselves
When nature, being oppress'd, commands the mind
To suffer with the body: I'll forbear;
And am fall'n out with my more headier will,
To take[18] the indisposed and sickly fit

[16] Here we have an instance of double elision, *wi' th'* for *with the*, that the two words may coalesce into one syllable. The Poet has many such. Still oftener a single elision for the same purpose, such as *by th'*, *for th'*, *from th'*, *on th'*, *to th'*; and in the second scene of this play we have "Shall *top th'* legitimate."

[17] Lear is here asserting something of the regal authority which he has abdicated; and his meaning depends somewhat on an emphasizing of the words *King*, *commands*, and *service*.

[18] The infinitive *to take* is here used *gerundively*, or like the Latin *gerund*, and so is equivalent to *in taking*. See *Macbeth*, page 86, note 26. — Here

For the sound man. — [*Looking on* KENT.
Death on my state! wherefore
Should he sit here? This act persuades me
That this remotion [19] of the Duke and her
Is practice only. Give me my servant forth.
Go tell the Duke and's wife I'd speak with them,
Now, presently: bid them come forth and hear me,
Or at their chamber-door I'll beat the drum
Till it cry sleep to death.[20]

Glos. I would have all well betwixt you. [*Exit.*

Lear. O me, my heart, my rising heart! — but, down!

Fool. Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney [21] did to the eels when she put 'em i' the paste alive; she knapp'd 'em o' the coxcombs with a stick, and cried, *Down, wantons, down!* 'Twas her brother that, in pure kindness to his horse, butter'd his hay.

Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOSTER, *and* Servants.

Lear. Good morrow to you both.

Corn. Hail to your Grace!
[KENT *is set at liberty.*

the Poet follows a well-known Latin idiom, using the comparative, *more headier*, in the sense of *too* heady, that is, too *headstrong*. He has the same usage repeatedly. For this use of the double comparative, see page 59, note 18.

[19] *Remotion* for *removal;* referring to Cornwall and Regan's action in *departing* from home.

[20] That is, till it kills sleep with noise and clamour.

[21] The etymology, says Nares, seems most probable, which derives *cockney* from *cookery*. *Le pays de cocagne*, or *coquaine*, in old French, means a country of good cheer. This *Lubberland*, as Florio calls it, seems to have been proverbial for the simplicity or gullibility of its inhabitants. A *cockney* and a *ninny-hammer*, or *simpleton*, were convertible terms. Dekker, in his *Newes from Hell*, says, "'Tis not our fault; but our mothers, our *cockering* mothers, who for their labour made us to be called *cockneys*."

Reg. I am glad to see your Highness.

Lear. Regan, I think you are; I know what reason
I have to think so: if thou shouldst not be glad,
I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,
Sepúlchring an adultress. — [*To* KENT.] O, are you free?
Some other time for that. — Belovèd Regan,
Thy sister's naught: O Regan, she hath tied
Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here, —
[*Points to his heart.*
I can scarce speak to thee; thou'lt not believe
Of how depraved a quality — O Regan!

Reg. I pray you, sir, take patience: I have hope
You less know how to value her desert
Than she to scant her duty.[22]

Lear. Say, how is that?

Reg. I cannot think my sister in the least
Would fail her obligation: if, sir, perchance
She have restrain'd the riots of your followers,
'Tis on such ground, and to such wholesome end,
As clears her from all blame.

Lear. My curses on her!

Reg. O, sir, you are old;
Nature in you stands on the very verge
Of her confine: you should be ruled, and led

[22] There is something of perplexity here. Taken strictly, the passage can only mean, "She knows *better* how to *be wanting in* her duty than you know how to value her desert"; which is clearly the reverse of the sense intended. The difficulty grows from putting a positive and a negative clause together in a comparison. Change the positive clause into a negative, and the sense comes right; thus: "You know *not* how to value her desert, *rather than* she knows how to be wanting in her duty." Still better, perhaps, if we change the negative clause into a positive: "You less know how to value her desert than she knows how to *do* her duty."

By some discretion that discerns your state
Better than you yourself. Therefore, I pray you,
That to our sister you do make return;
Say you have wrong'd her, sir.[23]

Lear. Ask her forgiveness?
Do you but mark how this becomes the House:[24]
Dear daughter, I confess that I am old;
Age is unnecessary:[25] *on my knees I beg* [Kneeling.
That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food.

Reg. Good sir, no more; these are unsightly tricks:
Return you to my sister.

Lear. [*Rising.*] Never, Regan:
She hath abated me of half my train;
Look'd black upon me; struck me with her tongue,
Most serpent-like, upon the very heart.
All the stored vengeances of Heaven fall
On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones,
You taking airs, with lameness!

Corn. Fie, sir, fie!

Lear. You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames

[23] Nothing is so heart-cutting as a cold, unexpected defence or palliation of a cruelty passionately complained of, or so expressive of thorough hard-heartedness. And feel the excessive horror of Regan's "O, sir, you are old!" and then her drawing from that universal object of reverence and indulgence the very reason for her frightful conclusion, "Say you have wrong'd her." All Lear's faults increase our pity for him. We refuse to know them otherwise than as means of his sufferings, and aggravations of his daughters' ingratitude. — COLERIDGE.

[24] How it comports with the order of the family or of the domestic relations, that the father should be a kneeling suppliant to the child.

[25] *Unnecessary*, here, is commonly explained as meaning *necessitous*, or *without the necessaries of life*. But the more probable explanation takes Lear as giving an ironical apology for the uselessness of his existence. "An old man, such as I am, can be of no use to any one, and so must be content to live upon alms."

Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,
You fen-suck'd fogs, drawn by the powerful Sun,
To fall[26] and blast her pride!

Reg. O the blest gods! so will you wish on me,
When the rash mood is on.

Lear. No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse:
Thy tender-hefted[27] nature shall not give
Thee o'er to harshness: her eyes are fierce; but thine
Do comfort, and not burn. 'Tis not in thee
To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,
To bandy hasty words, to scant my sizes,[28]
And, in conclusion, to oppose the bolt
Against my coming in: thou better know'st
The offices of nature, bond of childhood,
Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude;
Thy half of the kingdom hast thou not forgot,
Wherein I thee endow'd.

Reg. Good sir, to th' purpose.

Lear. Who put my man i' the stocks? [*Tucket within.*

Corn. What trumpet's that?

Reg. I know't, — my sister's: this approves her letter,
That she would soon be here. —

[26] *Fall* is here a transitive verb, meaning *take down* or *abase.*

[27] The best explanation of this is given in *The Edinburgh Review*, July, 1869: "*Heft* is a well-known older English word for *handle*, that which holds or contains; and *tender-hefted* is simply *delicately housed, finely sheathed. Heft* was in this way applied proverbially to the body; and Howell has a phrase, quoted by Halliwell, which is a good example of its graphic use, — 'loose in the heft,' — to designate an ill habit of body, a person of dissipated ways. *Tender-hefted* is, therefore, *tender-bodied, delicately-organized*, or, more literally, *finely-fleshed.*"

[28] A *size* is a *portion* or *allotment* of food. The term *sizer* is still used at the English universities for one of the lowest rank of students, living on a stated allowance.

Enter OSWALD.

Is your lady come?

Lear. This is a slave, whose easy-borrow'd pride
Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.[29] —
Out, varlet, from my sight!

Corn. What means your Grace?

Lear. Who stock'd my servant? Regan, I have good hope
Thou didst not know on't. — Who comes here? O Heavens,

Enter GONERIL.

If you do love old men, if your sweet sway
Allow[30] obedience, if yourselves are old,
Make it your cause; send down, and take my part! —
[*To* GON.] Art not ashamed to look upon this beard? —
O Regan, wilt thou take her by the hand?

Gon. Why not by th' hand, sir? How have I offended?
All's not offence that indiscretion finds
And dotage terms so.

Lear. O sides, you are too tough!
Will you yet hold? — How came my man i' the stocks?

Corn. I set him there, sir: but his own disorders
Deserved much less advancement.

Lear. You! did you?

Reg. I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.[31]

[29] Whose pride depends upon, or *comes and goes* with the shifting *favour* of his mistress; who puts on airs or falls his crest according as she smiles or frowns upon him.

[30] To *allow* in its old sense of *approve*. So in the 11th Psalm of *The Psalter:* "The Lord *alloweth* the righteous." Also in St. Luke, xi. 48: "Truly ye bear witness that ye *allow* the deeds of your fathers." See, also, page 86, note 21.

[31] "Since you are weak, be content to think yourself so."

If, till the expiration of your month,
You will return and sojourn with my sister,
Dismissing half your train, come then to me:
I'm now from home, and out of that provision
Which shall be needful for your entertainment.

Lear. Return to her, and fifty men dismiss'd?
No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose
To wage against the enmity o' the air;
To be a comrade with the wolf, and howl
Necessity's sharp pinch![32] Return with her?
Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took
Our youngest-born, I could as well be brought
To knee his throne, and, squire-like, pension beg
To keep base life afoot. Return with her?
Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter[33]
To this detested groom. [*Pointing at* OSWALD.

Gon. At your choice, sir.

Lear. I pr'ythee, daughter, do not make me mad:
I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell:
We'll no more meet, no more see one another.
But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,
Which I must needs call mine: thou art a boil,
A plague-sore, an embossèd[34] carbuncle,
In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee;
Let shame come when it will, I do not call it:
I do not bid the Thunder-bearer shoot,

[32] "Necessity's sharp pinch" is, of course, the pinch, or the *pang*, of hunger, or of cold, or of both.

[33] *Sumpter* is used along with *horse* or *mule*, to signify one that carries provisions or other necessaries.

[34] *Embossèd* is *swollen* or *protuberant*, like the boss of a shield.

Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove:[35]
Mend when thou canst; be better at thy leisure:
I can be patient; I can stay with Regan,
I and my hundred knights.

Reg. Not altogether so:
I look'd not for you yet, nor am provided
For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister;
For those that mingle reason with your passion
Must be content to think you old, and so —
But she knows what she does.

Lear. Is this well spoken?

Reg. I dare avouch it, sir. What, fifty followers?
Is it not well? What should you need of more?
Yea, or so many, sith[36] that both charge and danger
Speak 'gainst so great a number? How, in one house,
Should many people, under two commands,
Hold amity? 'Tis hard; almost impossible.

Gon. Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance
From those that she calls servants, or from mine?

Reg. Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to slack you,
We could control them. If you will come to me, —
For now I spy a danger, — I entreat you
To bring but five-and-twenty: to no more
Will I give place or notice.

Lear. I gave you all, —

Reg. And in good time you gave it.[37]

[35] "The Thunder-bearer" is the same as Jove the Thunderer. So that *Nor* connects "do not bid" and "tell tales."

[36] *Sith* and *sithence* were old forms just falling out of use in the Poet's time, and now entirely superseded by *since*.

[37] This spurt of malice, snapped in upon Lear's pathetic appeal, is the *ne plus ultra* of human fiendishness. In the Introduction, page 17, I have

Lear. — Made you my guardians, my depositaries ;
But kept a reservation to be follow'd
With such a number. What, must I come to you
With five-and-twenty, Regan? said you so?

Reg. And speak't again, my lord ; no more with me.

Lear. Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favour'd,
When others are more wicked : not being the worst
Stands in some rank of praise. — [*To* GON.] I'll go with thee :
Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty,
And thou art twice her love.

Gon. Hear me, my lord :
What need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five,
To follow in a house where twice so many
Have a command to tend you?

Reg. What need one?

Lear. O, reason not the need : our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous :
Allow not nature more than nature needs,

remarked somewhat upon the scarce-credible sameness of these two she-tigers. Professor Dowden discriminates them very happily in the following : "The two terrible creatures are distinguishable. Goneril is the calm wielder of a pitiless force, the resolute initiator of cruelty. Regan is a smaller, shriller, fiercer, more eager piece of malice. The tyranny of the elder sister is a cold, persistent pressure, as little affected by tenderness or scruple as the action of some crushing hammer ; Regan's ferocity is more unmeasured, and less abnormal or monstrous. Regan would avoid her father ; and, while she confronts him alone, quails a little as she hears the old man's curse pronounced against her sister : 'O the blest gods! so will you wish on me when the rash mood is on.' But Goneril knows that a helpless old man is only a helpless old man, that words are merely words. When, after Lear's terrible malediction, he rides away with his train, Goneril, who would bring things to an issue, pursues her father, determined to see matters out to the end. To complete the horror they produce in us, these monsters are amorous. Their love is even more hideous than their hate."

Man's life is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady:
If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps thee warm.[38] But, for true need, —
You Heavens, give me patience, — patience I need! —
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age; wretched in both!
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger;
And let not women's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks! — No, you unnatural hags,
I will have such revenges on you both,
That all the world shall — I will do such things, —
What they are, yet I know not; but they shall be
The terrors of the Earth. You think I'll weep;
No, I'll not weep:
I have full cause of weeping; but this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,[39]
Or e'er I'll weep. — O Fool, I shall go mad!

[*Exeunt* LEAR, GLOSTER, KENT, *and the* FOOL.

Storm heard at a distance.

Corn. Let us withdraw; 'twill be a storm.

Reg. This house is little: th' old man and his people
Cannot be well bestow'd.

Gon. 'Tis his own blame; 'hath put himself from rest,

[38] The scope of this reasoning seems to be, "You need clothing only for warmth; yet you pile up expense of dress for other ends, while your dress, after all, hardly meets that natural want; which shows that you would rather suffer lack of warmth than of personal adornment."

[39] *Flaws* anciently signified *fragments*, as well as mere *cracks*. The word, as Bailey observes, was "especially applied to the breaking off *shivers* or thin pieces from precious stones."

And must needs taste his folly.

Reg. For his particular, I'll receive him gladly,
But not one follower.

Gon. So am I purposed.
Where is my lord of Gloster?

Corn. Follow'd the old man forth: — he is return'd.

Re-enter GLOSTER.

Glos. The King is in high rage.

Corn. Whither is he going?

Glos. He calls to horse; but will I know not whither.

Corn. 'Tis best to give him way; he leads himself.

Gon. My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.[40]

Glos. Alack! the night comes on, and the bleak winds
Do sorely ruffle;[41] for many miles about
There's scarce a bush.

Reg. O, sir, to wilful men,
The injuries that they themselves procure
Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors:
He is attended with a desperate train;
And what they may incense him to, being apt
To have his ear abused, wisdom bids fear.

Corn. Shut up your doors, my lord; 'tis a wild night:
My Regan counsels well. Come out o' the storm.

[*Exeunt.*

[40] "Do not by any means entreat him to stay," is the meaning.

[41] Are very *boisterous* or *blustering*. A stronger sense than *ruffle* now has.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Heath. A Storm, with Thunder and Lightning*

Enter KENT *and a* Gentleman, *meeting.*

Kent. Who's here, besides foul weather?

Gent. One minded, like the weather, most unquietly.

Kent. I know you. Where's the King?

Gent. Contending with the fretful elements;
Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea,
Or swell the curlèd waters 'bove the main,[1]
That things might change or cease; tears his white hair,
Which the impetuous blasts, with eyeless rage,
Catch in their fury, and make nothing of;
Strives in his little world of man t' out-scorn
The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain.
This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,
The lion and the belly-pinchèd wolf[2]
Keep their fur dry, unbonnetted he runs,
And bids what will take all.

Kent. But who is with him?

Gent. None but the Fool; who labours to out-jest
His heart-struck injuries.

Kent. Sir, I do know you;
And dare, upon the warrant of my note,[3]

[1] Lear wishes for the destruction of the world, either by the winds blowing the land into the water, or raising the waters so as to overwhelm the land.

[2] A bear made fierce by suckling her cubs; a wolf enraged by the gnawings of hunger.

[3] *Note* for *notice, knowledge,* or *observation;* referring to "I do *know* you." Shakespeare repeatedly uses *note* thus.

Commend a dear thing to you. There's division,
Although as yet the face of it be cover'd
With mutual cunning, 'twixt Albany and Cornwall;
Who have — as who have not, that their great stars
Throne and set high? — servants, who seem no less,
Which are to France the spies and speculators
Intelligent of our State;[4] what hath been seen,
Either in snuffs and packings of the Dukes;[5]
Or the hard rein which both of them have borne
Against the old kind King; or something deeper,
Whereof perchance these are but furnishings.[6]
But, true it is, from France there comes a power
Into this scatter'd kingdom;[7] who already,
Wise in our negligence, have secret feet[8]
In some of our best ports, and are at point
To show their open banner. Now to you:
If on my credit you dare build so far
To make your speed to Dover, you shall find
Some that will thank you, making just report
Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow
The King hath cause to plain.
I am a gentleman of blood and breeding,

4 "Who seem the servants of Albany and Cornwall, but are really engaged in the service of France as spies, gathering and conveying information of all that is done here." *Intelligent* here carries the sense not only of *knowing*, but also of *giving intelligence; intelligencers.* — *Speculator* in the Latin sense of *observer* or *looker-on.*

5 *Snuffs* are dislikes, and *packings* underhand contrivances.

6 That is, whereof these things are but the trimmings or appendages; not the thing itself, but only the circumstances or *furniture* of the thing.

7 That is, having its *military force* scattered; or, perhaps, *distracted* by the feud between Albany and Cornwall.

8 Have *secret footing;* have *landed secretly.* — *At point*, next line, is *ready* or *prepared; on the point of showing*, as we should say.

And from some knowledge and assurance offer
This office to you.

Gent. I will talk further with you.

Kent. No, do not.
For confirmation that I am much more
Than my out-wall, open this purse, and take
What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia, —
As fear not but you shall, — show her this ring;
And she will tell you who your fellow[9] is
That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm!
I will go seek the King.

Gent. Give me your hand: have you no more to say?

Kent. Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet, —
That, when we've found the King, — in which your pain
That way, I'll this,[10] — he that first lights on him
Holla the other. [*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II. — *Another part of the Heath. Storm still.*

Enter LEAR *and the* FOOL.

Lear. Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!
You sulphurous and thought-executing[1] fires,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world!

[9] *Fellow* was often used for *companion.*

[10] "In which search you take pains in that direction, and I will in this."

[1] *Thought-executing* may mean acting with the swiftness of thought, or executing the thoughts of Jupiter *Tonans.* — *Vaunt-couriers* originally meant the foremost scouts of an army, as lightning foreruns thunder.

Crack Nature's moulds, all germens spill at once,[2]
That make ingrateful man!

Fool. O nuncle, court holy-water[3] in a dry house is better than this rain-water out o' door. Good nuncle, in, and ask thy daughter's blessing: here's a night pities neither wise men nor fools.

Lear. Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain!
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,
You owe me no subscription:[4] then let fall
Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man:
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters join'd
Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul!

Fool. He that has a house to put's head in has a good head-piece.

The man that makes his toe
What he his heart should make
Shall of a corn cry woe,[5]
And turn his sleep to wake.

[2] There is a parallel passage in *The Winter's Tale:* "Let Nature crush the sides o' the Earth together, and mar the *seeds* within."

[3] *Court holy-water* is fair words and flattering speeches. So Chillingworth, in one of his sermons: "Can any man think so unworthily of our Saviour, as to esteem these words of His for no better than *compliment?* for nothing but *court holy-water?*"

[4] Are under no oath or obligation of service of kindness to me. Referring to the binding force of one's signature. See page 70, note 6.

[5] A covert allusion to the King, who has set his children above himself, and now they are trampling on him. Making the heart and the toe change

For there was never yet fair woman but she made mouths in a glass.

Lear. No, I will be the pattern of all patience ;
I will say nothing.

Enter KENT.

Kent. Alas, sir ! are you here ? things that love night
Love not such nights as these ; the wrathful skies
Gallow[6] the very wanderers of the dark,
And make them keep their caves. Since I was man,
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never
Remember to have heard : man's nature cannot carry
Th' affliction nor the fear.[7]

Lear. Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulgèd crimes,
Unwhipp'd of justice : hide thee, thou bloody hand ;
Thou perjured, and thou simular[8] of virtue
That art incestuous : caitiff, to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming
Hast practised on man's life : close pent-up guilts,

places with each other is the Fool's characteristic figure for such an inversion of things as Lear has made in setting his daughters above himself.

[6] To *gallow* is to *frighten*, to *terrify*. The word is not met with elsewhere, I think, though the form *gally* is said to be used in the West of England.

[7] *Affliction* for *infliction ;* the two being then equivalent. Man's nature cannot endure the infliction, nor even the fear of it. So in the Prayer-Book : "Defend us from all dangers and mischiefs, and from the fear of them."

[8] *Simular* for *simulator*. A simulator is one who puts on the show of what he is not, as a *dissimulator* puts off the show of what he is.

Rive your concealing continents,[9] and cry
These dreadful summoners grace.[10] I am a man
More sinn'd against than sinning.
Kent. Alack, bare-headed!
Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel;
Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest:
Repose you there; while I to this hard house
(More harder than the stones whereof 'tis raised;
Which even but now, demanding after you,
Denied me to come in) return, and force
Their scanted courtesy.
Lear. My wits begin to turn.—
Come on, my boy: how dost, my boy? art cold?
I'm cold myself.—Where is this straw, my fellow?
The art of our necessities is strange,
That can make vile things precious.[11] Come, your hovel.—
Poor Fool and knave, I've one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee.
Fool. [Sings.] *He that has and*[12] *a little tiny wit,—*
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,—
Must make content with his fortunes fit,
Though the rain it raineth every day.
Lear. True, my good boy.—Come, bring us to this hovel. [*Exeunt* LEAR *and* KENT.

[9] *Continent* for that which *contains* or *encloses*. So in *Antony and Cleopatra*: "Heart, once be stronger than thy *continent*."

[10] *Summoners* are officers that summon offenders for trial or punishment. To *cry grace* is to beg for mercy or pardon. Lear is regarding the raging elements as the agents or representatives of the gods, calling criminals to judgment.

[11] An allusion to alchemy, which was supposed to have the power of transmuting vile metals into precious, as lead into gold.

[12] In old ballads, *and* is sometimes, as here, apparently redundant, but adds a slight force to the expression, like *even*.

Fool. This is a brave night. I'll speak a prophecy ere I go:

When priests are more in word than matter;
When brewers mar their malt with water;
When nobles are their tailors' tutors;
No heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors;
When every case in law is right;
No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;
When slanders do not live in tongues,
Nor cut-purses[13] come not to throngs;
When usurers tell[14] their gold i' the field;—
Then shall the realm of Albion
Come to great confusion:
Then comes the time, who lives to see't,
That going shall be used with feet.

This prophecy Merlin shall make;[15] for I live before his time. [*Exit.*

SCENE III. — *A Room in* GLOSTER'S *Castle.*

Enter GLOSTER *and* EDMUND.

Glos. Alack, alack, Edmund, I like not this unnatural dealing. When I desired their leave that I might pity him, they took from me the use of mine own house; charged me, on pain of their perpetual displeasure, neither to speak of him, entreat for him, nor any way sustain him.

Edm. Most savage, and unnatural!

[13] *Cut-purses* were the same as what we call *pickpockets.*

[14] To *tell*, again, in the old sense of to *count.* See page 115, note 10.

[15] Merlin was a famous prophet in the Druidical mythology of ancient Britain, who did divers wonderful things "by his deep science and Hell-dreaded might." Some of his marvels are sung in *The Faerie Queene*, iii. 2, 18–21. Part of his prophecy, which the Fool here anticipates, is given in Puttenham's *Art of Poetry*, 1589.

Glos. Go to; say you nothing. There is division between the Dukes; and a worse matter than that: I have received a letter this night; — 'tis dangerous to be spoken; — I have lock'd the letter in my closet: these injuries the King now bears will be revenged home;[1] there is part of a power already footed: we must incline to the King. I will seek him, and privily relieve him: go you, and maintain talk with the Duke, that my charity be not of him perceived: if he ask for me, I am ill, and gone to bed. Though I die for it, as no less is threaten'd me, the King my old master must be relieved. There is some strange thing toward,[2] Edmund; pray you, be careful. [*Exit.*

Edm. This courtesy, forbid thee![3] shall the Duke
Instantly know; and of that letter too.
This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me
That which my father loses, — no less than all:
The younger rises when the old doth fall. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV. — *The Heath, near a Hovel. Storm continues.*

Enter LEAR, KENT, *and the* FOOL.[1]

Kent. Here is the place, my lord; good my lord, enter:
The tyranny of the open night's too rough
For nature to endure.

[1] Here, as often, *home* has the adverbial sense of *thoroughly, to the utmost.*

[2] *Toward*, again, for *at hand* or *forthcoming*. See page 96, note 2.

[3] "*Forbid* thee" I take to mean "*A curse upon* thee," or like our phrase, "*Confound* you." So in *Macbeth*, i. 3, we have "He shall live a man *forbid*"; that is, shall live *under a curse* or *an interdict;* pursued by an evil fate. Mr. Crosby, however, takes *forbid* in the sense merely of *forbidden*, and as agreeing with *courtesy*. In this case, the reference of course would be to the aid and comfort which Gloster resolves to give the old King, notwithstanding the threats of Cornwall and Regan. It may be so: but does not this make the sense too tame?

[1] O, what a world's convention of agonies is here! All external nature

Lear. Let me alone.

Kent. Good my lord, enter here.

Lear. Wilt break my heart?

Kent. I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.

Lear. Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;
But where the greater malady is fix'd,
The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear;
But, if thy flight lay toward the roaring sea,
Thou'dst meet the bear i' the mouth. When the mind's free,
The body's delicate: the tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else
Save what beats there. — Filial ingratitude!
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to't? But I will punish home:
No, I will weep no more. In such a night
To shut me out! — Pour on; I will endure; —
In such a night as this! O Regan, Goneril!
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all, —
O, that way madness lies; let me shun that;
No more of that.

Kent. Good my lord, enter here.

Lear. Pr'ythee, go in thyself; seek thine own ease:
This tempest will not give me leave to ponder

in a storm, all moral nature convulsed, — the real madness of Lear, the feigned madness of Edgar, the babbling of the Fool, the desperate fidelity of Kent, — surely such a scene was never conceived before or since! Take it but as a picture for the eye only, it is more terrific than any which a Michael Angelo, inspired by a Dante, could have conceived, and which none but a Michael Angelo could have executed. Or let it have been uttered to the blind, the howlings of nature would seem converted into the voice of conscious humanity. — COLERIDGE.

On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in. —
[*To the* FOOL.] In, boy; go first. — You houseless poverty, —
Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep. —
[*The* FOOL *goes in.*

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd[2] raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel;
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the Heavens more just.

Edg. [*Within.*] Fathom and half, fathom and half! Poor Tom! [*The* FOOL *runs out.*

Fool. Come not in here, nuncle; here's a spirit. Help me, help me!

Kent. Give me thy hand. — Who's there?

Fool. A spirit, a spirit: he says his name's poor Tom.

Kent. What art thou that dost grumble there i' the straw? Come forth.

Enter EDGAR, *disguised as a* Madman.

Edg. Away! the foul fiend follows me![3]

[2] *Loop'd* and *window'd* is full of *holes* and *apertures*. The allusion is to loop-holes, such as are found in ancient castles, and designed for the admission of light and air.

[3] Edgar's assumed madness serves the great purpose of taking off part of the shock which would otherwise be caused by the true madness of Lear, and further displays the profound difference between the two. In Edgar's ravings Shakespeare all the while lets you see a fixed purpose, a practical end in view; — in Lear's, there is only the brooding of the one anguish, an eddy without progression. — COLERIDGE.

Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind.
Hum! go to thy cold bed, and warm thee.[4]

Lear. Didst thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?

Edg. Who gives any thing to poor Tom? whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame, through ford and whirlpool, over bog and quagmire;[5] that hath laid knives under his pillow, and halters in his pew; set ratsbane by his porridge;[6] made him, proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting-horse over four-inch'd bridges, to course his own shadow for a traitor. — Bless thy five wits![7] — Tom's a-cold. O, do de, do de, do de.[8] — Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking![9] Do poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes: — There could I have him now, — and there, — and there, — and there again, and there.

[*Storm still.*

Lear. What, have his daughters brought him to this pass? — Couldst thou save nothing? Didst thou give 'em all?

[4] This appears to have been a sort of proverbial phrase. Shakespeare has it again in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Staunton quotes, from *The Spanish Tragedy*, "What outcries pluck me from my *naked* bed?" and says, "The phrase *to go to a cold bed* meant only to *go cold to bed;* to *rise from a naked bed* signified to *get up naked from bed*."

[5] Alluding to the *ignis fatuus*, supposed to be lights kindled by mischievous beings to lead travellers into destruction.

[6] Fiends were commonly represented as thus tempting the wretched to suicide. So in *Doctor Faustus*, 1604: "Swords, poisons, halters, and envenomed steel are laid before me, to dispatch myself."

[7] The five senses were sometimes called the *five wits*. And the mental powers, being supposed to correspond in number to the senses, were called the *five wits* also. The reference here is, probably, to the latter.

[8] These syllables are probably meant to represent the chattering of one who shivers with cold.

[9] To *take* is to strike with malignant influence. So in ii. 4 of this play: "Strike her young bones, you *taking* airs, with lameness!"

Fool. Nay, he reserved a blanket, else we had been all shamed.

Lear. Now, all the plagues that in the pendulous air
Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters!

Kent. He hath no daughters, sir.

Lear. Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued nature
To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.
Is it the fashion, that discarded fathers
Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?
Judicious punishment! 'twas this flesh begot
Those pelican daughters.[10]

Edg. *Pillicock sat on Pillicock-hill:*
Halloo, halloo, loo, loo![11]

Fool. This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen.

Edg. Take heed o' the foul fiend: obey thy parents; keep thy word justly; swear not; set not thy sweet heart on proud array. Tom's a-cold.

Lear. What hast thou been?

Edg. A serving-man, proud in heart and mind; that curl'd my hair; wore gloves in my cap;[12] swore as many oaths as I spake words, and broke them in the sweet face of Heaven: wine loved I deeply; dice dearly: false of heart, light of ear,[13] bloody of hand; hog in sloth, fox in stealth,

[10] The young pelican is fabled to suck the mother's blood. The allusions to this fable are very numerous in old writers.

[11] In illustration of this, Mr. Halliwell has pointed out the following couplet in *Gammer Gurton's Garland:*—

Pillycock, Pillycock sat on a hill;
If he's not gone, he sits there still.

[12] *Gloves* were anciently worn in the cap, either as the favour of a mistress, or as the memorial of a friend, or as a badge to be challenged.

[13] *Light of ear* means "sinning with the ear"; that is, greedy or credulous of slander and malicious reports, or of obscene talk.

wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of shoes nor the rustling of silks betray thy poor heart to women: keep thy pen from lenders' books, and defy the foul fiend.

Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind;
Says suum, mun, ha, no, nonny:
Dolphin my boy, my boy, sessa! let him trot by.[14]

[Storm still.

Lear. Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy uncover'd body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! here's three on's are sophisticated.[15] Thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. — Off, off, you lendings! — come, unbutton here.

[*Tearing off his clothes.*

Fool. Pr'ythee, nuncle, be contented; 'tis a naughty night to swim in. Look, here comes a walking fire.

Edg. This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet:[16] he begins at curfew, and walks till the first cock; he gives the web and

[14] Much effort has been made to explain this strain of jargon; but it probably was not meant to be understood, its sense lying in its having no sense. And Edgar's counterfeit seems to proceed in part by stringing together odds and ends of old ballads, without connection or intelligible purpose. *Sessa* is elsewhere used by the Poet for *cease* or *be quiet*. *Dolphin* is the old form of *Dauphin;* and "Dolphin my boy, my boy, cease, let him trot by" is the burden of a ridiculous old song.

[15] Meaning himself, Kent, and the Fool; and they three are sophisticated out of nature in wearing clothes. Therefore, to become unsophisticated, he will off with his "lendings," and be as Edgar is.

[16] The names of this fiend and most of the fiends mentioned by Edgar were found in Harsnet's book. It was an old tradition that spirits were relieved from confinement at the time of curfew, that is, at the close of

the pin,[17] squints the eye, and makes the harelip; mildews the white wheat, and hurts the poor creature of Earth.

Saint Withold footed thrice the 'old;
He met the night-mare and her nine-fold;
Bid her alight, and her troth plight,[18]
And, aroint thee, witch, aroint thee![19]

Kent. How fares your Grace?

Enter GLOSTER, *with a Torch.*

Lear. What's he?

Kent. Who's there? What is't you seek?

Glos. What are you there? Your names?

Edg. Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt and the water;[20] swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog; drinks the green mantle of the standing pool; who is whipp'd from tything to tything, and stock-

the day, and were permitted to wander at large till the first cock-crowing. Hence, in *The Tempest*, they are said to "rejoice to hear the solemn curfew."

17 "The web and the pin" is thus explained in Florio's *Italian and English Dictionary*: "*Cataratta*, — a dimnesse of sight occasioned by humores hardned in the eies, called a Cataract, or a pin and a web." Also in Cotgrave's *French and English Dictionary*: "*Taye*, — any filme, or thinne skinne, &c.; and hence a pin or web in th' eye, a white filme overgrowing the eye."

18 Who Saint Withold was, or was supposed to have been, is uncertain. — *Wold* is a plain open country, whether hilly or not; formerly spelt *old*, *ould*, and *wold*, indifferently. *Nine-fold* is put for *nine foals*, to rhyme with *wold*. The *troth-plight* here referred to was meant as a charm against the *night-mare*.

19 There is some diversity of opinion as to the origin and meaning of *aroint*. In *Macbeth*, i. 3, "*Aroint* thee, witch," seems to be used as a charm against witchcraft; and the angry threatenings of the Witch at having it pronounced to her by the "rump-fed ronyon" looks as if she had been baffled by it. So that the more likely meaning seems to be, *stand off* or *be gone*.

20 The wall-newt and the water-newt; small lizards.

punish'd, and imprison'd ;[21] who hath had three suits to his back, six shirts to his body, horse to ride, and weapon to wear ;

But mice and rats, and such small deer,
Have been Tom's food for seven long year.[22]

Beware my follower. — Peace, Smulkin ! peace, thou fiend !

Glos. What, hath your Grace no better company?

Edg. *The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman :*
Modo he's call'd, and Mahu.[23]

Glos. Our flesh and blood, my lord, is grown so vile,
That it doth hate what gets it.[24]

Edg. Poor Tom's a-cold.

Glos. Go in with me. My duty cannot suffer
T' obey in all your daughters' hard commands :
Though their injunction be to bar my doors,

[21] "From *tything* to *tything*" is from *parish* to *parish*. The severities inflicted on the wretched beings, one of whom Edgar is here personating, are set forth in Harrison's *Description of England :* "The rogue being apprehended, committed to prison, and tried at the next assizes, if he be convicted for a vagabond, he is then adjudged to be grievously whipped, and burned through the gristle of the right ear with a hot iron, as a manifestation of his wicked life, and due punishment received for the same."

[22] This couplet is founded on one in the old metrical romance of *Sir Bevis*, who was confined seven years in a dungeon : —

Rattes and myce and such smal dere
Was his meate that seven yere.

[23] So in Harsnet's *Declaration :* "*Maho* was the chief devil that had possession of Sarah Williams ; but another of the possessed, named Richard Mainy, was molested by a still more considerable fiend, called *Modu*." Again the said Richard Mainy deposes : "Furthermore it is pretended, that there remaineth still in mee the prince of devils, whose name should be *Modu*." — The two lines conclude a catch in *The Goblins*, a piece ascribed to Sir John Suckling.

[24] Of course Gloster here alludes to his son Edgar, as well as to Lear's daughters ; and this makes Edgar the more anxious to keep up his disguise, lest his feelings should mar his counterfeiting. Hence he exclaims, "Poor Tom's a-cold."

And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,
Yet have I ventured to come seek you out,
And bring you where both fire and food is ready.
Lear. First let me talk with this philosopher. —
What is the cause of thunder?
Kent. Good my lord, take his offer; go into the house.
Lear. I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban. —
What is your study?
Edg. How to prevent the fiend, and to kill vermin.
Lear. Let me ask you one word in private.
Kent. Impórtune him once more to go, my lord;
His wits begin t' unsettle.
Glos. Canst thou blame him?
His daughters seek his death: — ah, that good Kent!
He said it would be thus, — poor banish'd man!
Thou say'st the King grows mad: I'll tell thee, friend,
I'm almost mad myself: I had a son,
Now outlaw'd from my blood; he sought my life,
But lately, very late: I loved him, friend,
No father his son dearer: true to tell thee, [*Storm still.*
The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's this! —
I do beseech your Grace, —
Lear. O, cry you mercy,[25] sir. —
Noble philosopher, your company.
Edg. Tom's a-cold.
Glos. In, fellow, there, into the hovel; keep thee warm.
Lear. Come, let's in all.
Kent. This way, my lord.
Lear. With him;
I will keep still with my philosopher.

[25] "I cry you mercy" is an old phrase for "I ask your pardon."

Kent. Good my lord, soothe him ; let him take the fellow.
Glos. Take him you on.
Kent. Sirrah, come on ; go along with us.
Lear. Come, good Athenian.
Glos. No words, no words : hush.
Edg. *Child Roland to the dark tower came ·*
His word was still, Fie, foh, and fum,
I smell the blood of a British man.[26] [Exeunt.

SCENE V. — *A Room in* GLOSTER'S *Castle.*

Enter CORNWALL *and* EDMUND.

Corn. I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

Edm. How, my lord, I may be censured, that nature thus gives way to loyalty, something fears me to think of.

Corn. I now perceive, it was not altogether your brother's evil disposition made him seek his death ; but a provoking merit, set a-work by a reprovable badness in himself.[1]

[26] Child Roland, that is, Knight Orlando, was reputed to be the youngest son of King Arthur. Edgar, it seems, purposely disjoints his quotations, or leaves their sense incomplete. In the ballad of *Jack and the Giants*, which, if not older than the play, may have been compiled from something that was so, a giant lets off this : —

> Fee, faw, fum,
> I smell the blood of an Englishman:
> Be he alive, or be he dead,
> I'll grind his bones to make my bread.

[1] By a "provoking merit" Cornwall means, apparently, a *virtue apt to be provoked*, or *stirred into act* ; which virtue was set to work by some flagrant evil in Gloster himself ; and it was this, and not altogether a bad disposition in Edgar, that made Edgar seek the old man's life. *Provoking* for *provocable* : the active form with the passive sense. The Poet has a great many instances of such usage. Mr. Crosby, however, gives me a different interpretation ; taking *merit* in the neutral sense of *desert*, as the word is sometimes so used. "It was not altogether your brother Edgar's evil disposition

Edm. How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent to be just![2] This is the letter he spoke of, which approves him an intelligent party to the advantages of France. O Heavens! that this treason were not, or not I the detector!

Corn. Go with me to the Duchess.

Edm. If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty business in hand.[3]

Corn. True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloster. Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension.

Edm. [*Aside.*] If I find him comforting the King, it will stuff his suspicion more fully. — [*To* CORN.] I will persevere in my course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and my blood.

Corn. I will lay trust upon thee; and thou shalt find a dearer father in my love. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI. — *A Chamber in a Farm-house adjoining the Castle.*

Enter GLOSTER, LEAR, KENT, *the* FOOL, *and* EDGAR.

Glos. Here is better than the open air; take it thankfully. I will piece out the comfort with what addition I can: I will not be long from you.

that made him seek his father's death: it was the old man's *desert* that *provoked* him to it; that is, the old man *deserved* it." Cornwall then attempts to soften his remark by saying that this "provoking merit" was set at work by a reprovable badness in Edgar himself; using the mild term *reprovable* in connection with the unfilial badness of a son in seeking his father's death, even though the father deserved it.

[2] "*To be* just" is another instance of the infinitive used gerundively, and is equivalent to *of being* just. See page 117, note 18.

[3] The "mighty business in hand" is a war; as the "paper" in question is a letter informing Gloster that an army had landed from France.

Kent. All the power of his wits hath given way to his impatience. The gods reward your kindness! [*Exit* GLOSTER.

Edg. Frateretto calls me, and tells me Nero is an angler in the lake of darkness. Pray, innocent,[1] and beware the foul fiend.

Fool. Pr'ythee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman?

Lear. A king, a king!

Fool. No, he's a yeoman that has a gentleman to his son; for he's a mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before him.[2]

Lear. To have a thousand with red burning spits
Come hissing in upon 'em,—

Edg. The foul fiend bites my back.

Fool. He's mad that trusts in the tameness of a wolf, a horse's health, a boy's love, or a trull's oath.

Lear. It shall be done; I will arraign them straight.—
[*To* EDGAR.] Come, sit thou here, most learnèd justicer;[3]—
[*To the* FOOL.] Thou, sapient sir, sit here.—Now, you she foxes!—

Edg. Look, where he stands and glares!—Wantest thou eyes at trial, madam?[4]

Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me:—

[1] Rabelais says that Nero was a fiddler in Hell, and Trajan an angler. The history of Gargantua appeared in English before 1575. *Fools* were anciently termed *innocents*.

[2] A rather curious commentary on some of the Poet's own doings; who obtained from the Heralds' College a coat of arms in his father's name; thus getting his yeoman father dubbed a gentleman, in order, no doubt, that himself might inherit the rank.

[3] *Justicer* is the older and better word for what we now call a justice.

[4] When Edgar says, "Look, where he stands and glares!" he seems to be speaking in the character of a madman, who thinks he sees the fiend. "Wantest thou eyes at trial, madam?" is a question addressed to some

Fool. *Her boat hath a leak,*
And she must not speak
Why she dares not come over to thee.[5]

Edg. The foul fiend haunts poor Tom in the voice of a nightingale. Hopdance cries in Tom for two white herring. — Croak not, black angel; I have no food for thee.

Kent. How do you, sir? Stand you not so amazed: Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

Lear. I'll see their trial first. — Bring in the evidence. — [*To* EDGAR.] Thou robèd man of justice, take thy place; — [*To the* FOOL.] And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity, Bench by his side. — [*To* KENT.] You are o' the commission,
Sit you too.

Edg. Let us deal justly.

Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?
Thy sheep be in the corn;
And for one blast of thy minikin[6] *mouth*
Thy sheep shall take no harm.

Pur! the cat is gray.[7]

visionary person who is supposed, apparently, to be on trial, but does not see the spectre.

[5] *Bourn* here means a brook or rivulet, as streams of all sorts were apt to be taken for *boundaries*. These four lines are probably from an old song, which was imitated by Birch in his *Dialogue between Elizabeth and England;* the imitation beginning thus: —

Come over the bourn, Bessy, come over the bourn, Bessy,
Sweet Bessy, come over to me;
And I shall thee take, and my dear lady make
Before all that ever I see.

[6] *Minikin* was a term of endearment; *pretty, delicate, handsome.*

[7] The meaning of *Pur* is any thing but obvious. But *Purre* is the name of a devil in Harsnet. So perhaps the name suggests the purring of a cat and of a cat *too old to sing.*

Lear. Arraign her first; 'tis Goneril. I here take my oath before this honourable assembly, she kick'd the poor King her father.

Fool. Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

Lear. She cannot deny it.

Fool. Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool.[8]

Lear. And here's another, whose warp'd looks proclaim
What store her heart is made on. — Stop her there!
Arms, arms, sword, fire! — Corruption in the place! —
False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?[9]

Edg. Bless thy five wits!

Kent. O pity! — Sir, where is the patience now
That you so oft have boasted to retain?

Edg. [*Aside.*] My tears begin to take his part so much,
They'll mar my counterfeiting.

Lear. The little dogs and all,
Tray, Blanch, and Sweet-heart, see, they bark at me.

Edg. Tom will throw his head at them. — Avaunt, you curs!

Be thy mouth or black or white,
Tooth that poisons if it bite;
Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,

[8] This appears to have been a proverbial expression. It occurs again, somewhat modified, in *1 King Henry IV.*, ii. 4: "Thy state is taken for a joint-stool." It is also met with in various other old writings. — "I cry you mercy," again, for "I ask your pardon."

[9] It does not seem probable that Shakespeare wished to represent Lear as the subject of so extreme an hallucination as that his daughters were present, in their own figure and appearance, and that one of them escaped. It is more probable that he wished to represent them, personified by the excited imagination, in the form of stools; and that Kent or Edgar, seeing the bad effects which this vivid personification was working, snatched away one of the stools; and this produces the passionate explosion on Regan's supposed escape. — DR. BUCKNILL.

Hound or spaniel, brach or lym ;[10]
Or bobtail tike or trundle-tail ;
Tom will make them weep and wail :
For, with throwing thus my head,
Dogs leap the hatch, and all are fled.

Do de, de, de. Sessa ! Come, march to wakes and fairs and market towns. — Poor Tom, thy horn is dry.[11]

Lear. Then let them anatomize Regan ; see what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in Nature that makes these hard hearts ? — [*To* EDGAR.] You, sir, I entertain for one of my hundred ; only I do not like the fashion of your garments : you will say they are Persian attire ; but let them be changed.[12]

Kent. Now, good my lord, lie here and rest awhile.

10 A *lym* or *lyme* was a *hound ;* sometimes also called a *limmer* or *leamer ;* from the *leam* or *leash*, in which he was held till he was let slip.

11 A *horn* was usually carried by every Tom of Bedlam, to receive such drink as the charitable might afford him, with whatever scraps of food they might give him. When, therefore, he says his *horn is dry*, or *empty*, he merely means, in the language of the character he assumes, to supplicate that it may be filled with drink.

12 The intellectual and excited babbling of the Fool, and the exaggerated absurdities of Edgar, are stated by Ulrici and other critics to exert a bad influence upon the King's mind. To persons unacquainted with the character of the insane, this opinion must seem, at least, to be highly probable, notwithstanding that the evidence of the drama itself is against it ; for Lear is comparatively tranquil in conduct and language during the whole period of Edgar's mad companionship. It is only after the Fool has disappeared, — gone to sleep at midday, as he says, — and Edgar has left, to be the guide of his blind father, that the King becomes absolutely wild and incoherent. The singular and undoubted fact was probably unknown to Ulrici, that few things tranquillize the insane more than the companionship of the insane. It is a fact not easily explicable ; but it is one of which, either by the intuition of genius or by the information of experience, Shakespeare appears to have been aware. — DR. BUCKNILL.

Lear. Make no noise, make no noise: draw the curtains.
So, so, so: we'll go to supper i' the morning: so, so, so.

Fool. And I'll go to bed at noon.[13]

Re-enter GLOSTER.

Glos. Come hither, friend; where is the King my master?

Kent. Here, sir; but trouble him not, — his wits are gone.

Glos. Good friend, I pr'ythee take him in thy arms;
I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him:
There is a litter ready; lay him in't,
And drive toward Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet
Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master:
If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,
With thine, and all that offer to defend him,
Stand in assurèd loss: take up, take up;
And follow me, that will to some provision
Give thee quick conduct.

Kent. Oppress'd nature sleeps.
This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken senses,
Which, if convenience[14] will not allow,
Stand in hard cure.[15] — [*To the* FOOL.] Come, help to bear thy master;
Thou must not stay behind.

[13] These words are the last we have from the Fool. They are probably meant as a characteristic notice that the poor fellow's heart is breaking.

[14] *Convenience* is here meant as a word of four syllables, and must be so in order to fill up the verse. In like manner, the Poet repeatedly uses *conscience* and *patience* as trisyllables. Generally, indeed, in Shakespeare's time, the ending *-ience* was used by the poets as two syllables or as one, according to the occasion of their verse.

[15] That is, *can hardly be cured.* Similarly a little before: "Stand in assurèd loss." And a like phrase occurs in *Othello*, ii. 1: "Therefore my hopes, not suffocate to death, *stand in bold cure.*"

Glos. Come, come, away.

[*Exeunt* KENT, GLOSTER, *and the* FOOL, *bearing off the* King.

Edg. When we our betters see bearing our woes,
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.
Who alone suffers, suffers most i' the mind,
Leaving free things and happy shows behind;
But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip,
When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.
How light and portable[16] my pain seems now,
When that which makes me bend makes the King bow;
He childed as I father'd! — Tom, away!
Mark the high noises;[17] and thyself bewray,
When false opinion, whose wrong thought defiles thee,
In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.
What will hap more to-night,[18] safe 'scape the King!
Lurk, lurk. [*Exit.*

SCENE VII. — *A Room in* GLOSTER'S *Castle.*

Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GONERIL, EDMUND, *and* Servants.

Corn. Post speedily to my lord your husband; show him this letter: the army of France is landed. — Seek out the traitor Gloster. [*Exeunt some of the* Servants.

Reg. Hang him instantly.

Gon. Pluck out his eyes.

Corn. Leave him to my displeasure. — Edmund, keep you our sister company: the revenges we are bound to take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding.

16 *Portable* is *endurable*. Shakespeare has it repeatedly.

17 The great events that are at hand; the exciting sounds of war.

18 The meaning is, "*Whatsoever else* may happen to-night."

Advise the Duke, where you are going, to a most festinate[1] preparation: we are bound to the like. Our posts shall be swift and intelligent betwixt us. — Farewell, dear sister: — farewell, my Lord of Gloster.[2] —

Enter OSWALD.

How now! where's the King?

Osw. My Lord of Gloster hath convey'd him hence.
Some five or six and thirty of his knights,
Hot questrists[3] after him, met him at gate;
Who with some other of the lords dependants,[4]
Are gone with him towards Dover, where they boast
To have well-armèd friends.

Corn. Get horses for your mistress.

Gon. Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

Corn. Edmund, farewell. —

[*Exeunt* GONERIL, EDMUND, *and* OSWALD.

Go seek the traitor Gloster,
Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us. —

[*Exeunt other* Servants.

Though well we may not pass[5] upon his life
Without the form of justice, yet our power
Shall do a courtesy to our wrath,[6] which men

[1] *Festinate* is *speedy*. Not used again by the Poet, though he has *festinately* in the same sense.

[2] Meaning Edmund, who is now invested with his father's titles. Oswald, speaking immediately after, refers to the father by the same title.

[3] *Questrists* for *pursuers;* those who go in *quest* of any thing.

[4] Some other of the *dependant lords*, or, as we should say, the lords *dependant;* meaning lords of the King's retinue, and dependant upon him. So the Poet has "letters *patents*" where we should say "letters *patent*." See *King Richard II.*, page 76, note 26.

[5] That is, pass *sentence* or *judgment*. To *pass* was often used thus.

[6] Shall *bend* to our wrath; *wait upon* it or be its servant.

May blame, but not control. — Who's there? the traitor?

Re-enter Servants, *with* GLOSTER.

Reg. Ingrateful fox! 'tis he.

Corn. Bind fast his corky arms.[7]

Glos. What mean your Graces? Good my friends, consider
You are my guests: do me no foul play, friends.

Corn. Bind him, I say. [Servants *bind him.*

Reg. Hard, hard. — O filthy traitor!

Glos. Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

Corn. To this chair bind him. — Villain, thou shalt find —
[REGAN *plucks his beard.*

Glos. By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly done
To pluck me by the beard.

Reg. So white, and such a traitor!

Glos. Naughty lady,
These hairs, which thou dost ravish from my chin,
Will quicken, and accuse thee. I'm your host:
With robbers' hands my hospitable favours[8]
You should not ruffle thus. What will you do?

Corn. Come, sir, what letters had you late from France?

Reg. Be simple-answer'd, for we know the truth.

Corn. And what confederacy have you with the traitors
Late footed in the kingdom?

Reg. To whose hands have you sent the lunatic King?
Speak.

Glos. I have a letter guessingly set down,
Which came from one that's of a neutral heart,
And not from one opposed.

[7] *Corky* means *dry, withered,* or *shrivelled* with age.

[8] *Favours* here means *features.*

Corn. Cunning.

Reg. And false.

Corn. Where hast thou sent the King?

Glos. To Dover.

Reg. Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charged at peril —

Corn. Wherefore to Dover? Let him answer that.

Glos. I'm tied to th' stake, and I must stand the course.[9]

Reg. Wherefore to Dover?

Glos. Because I would not see thy cruel nails
Pluck out his poor old eyes; nor thy fierce sister
In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.
The sea, with such a storm as his bare head
In hell-black night endured, would have buoy'd up,
And quench'd the stellèd fires:[10] yet, poor old heart,
He holp the heavens to rain.
If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that stern time,
Thou shouldst have said, *Good porter, turn the key.*
All cruels else subscribe, but I shall see
The wingèd vengeance overtake such children.[11]

[9] An allusion to bear-baiting, where the custom was to chain a bear to a post, and then set the dogs on him. See *Macbeth*, page 161, note 2.

[10] "The *stellèd* fires" are the *starry* lights; *stella* being the Latin for *star*. — Heath says, "The verb *buoy up* is here used as a verb deponent, or as the middle form of the Greek verbs, to signify *buoy* or *lift itself up*."

[11] *Cruels*, probably, for *cruelties*, or *acts of cruelty*; *subscribe* an imperative verb, with *cruels* for its object; and *but* with the force of *if not*, like the Latin *nisi*. So that the meaning probably is, "Subscribe thou, that is, underwrite, guarantee, make good, all other deeds or instances of cruelty, if I do not see," &c. In other words, "If swift retribution be not seen to catch you for what you have done, then do not scruple to go security, to stand sponsor for all possible strains of inhumanity." The Poet has many words shortened in like manner; as *dispose* for *disposition*, *suspects* for *suspicions*, *characts* for *characters*, &c. He also has many instances of *but* used in that way. See *The Merchant*, page 121, note 19.

Corn. See't shalt thou never. — Fellows, hold the chair. —
Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

Glos. He that will think to live till he be old,
Give me some help! — O cruel! — O you gods!

Reg. One side will mock another; th' other too.

Corn. If you see vengeance, —

1 Serv. Hold your hand, my lord:
I've served you ever since I was a child;
But better service have I never done you
Than now to bid you hold.

Reg. How now, you dog!

1 Serv. If you did wear a beard upon your chin,
I'd shake it on this quarrel. What do you mean?

Corn. My villain! [*Draws.*

1 Serv. Nay, then, come on, and take the chance of anger.

[*Draws. They fight.* CORNWALL *is wounded.*

Reg. Give me thy sword. — A peasant stand up thus!

[*Seizes a sword, and runs at him behind.*

1 Serv. O, I am slain! — My lord, you have one eye left
To see some mischief on him. — O! [*Dies.*

Corn. Lest it see more, prevent it. — Out, vile jelly!
Where is thy lustre now?[12]

[12] The shocking savagery here displayed is commented on by Coleridge thus: "I will not disguise my conviction that, in this one point, the tragic in this play has been urged beyond the outermost mark and *ne plus ultra* of the dramatic." And again: "What shall I say of this scene? There is my reluctance to think Shakespeare wrong, and yet —" Professor Dowden aptly remarks upon the scene as follows: "The treachery of Edmund, and the torture to which Gloster is subjected, are out of the course of familiar experience; but they are commonplace and prosaic in comparison with the inhumanity of the sisters, and the agony of Lear. When we have climbed the steep ascent of Gloster's mount of passion, we see still above us another *via dolorosa* leading to that 'wall of eagle-baffling mountain, black, wintry,

Glos. All dark and comfortless. — Where's my son Edmund? —
Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature,
To quit[13] this horrid act.

Reg. Out, treacherous villain!
Thou call'st on him that hates thee: it was he
That made the overture[14] of thy treasons to us;
Who is too good to pity thee.

Glos. O my follies! Then Edgar was abused. —
Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!

Reg. Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell
His way to Dover. — How is't, my lord? how look you?

Corn. I have received a hurt: follow me, lady. —
Turn out that eyeless villain; — throw this slave
Upon the dunghill. — Regan, I bleed apace:
Untimely comes this hurt: give me your arm.

[*Exit* CORNWALL, *led by* REGAN. Servants *unbind* GLOSTER, *and lead him out.*

2 Serv. I'll never care what wickedness I do,
If this man come to good.[15]

dead, unmeasured,' to which Lear is chained. Thus the one story of horror serves as a means of approach to the other, and helps us to conceive its magnitude."

[13] *Quit* for *requite* is very frequent in Shakespeare.

[14] *Overture*, here, is *revealment* or *disclosure*.

[15] This bit of dialogue serves as sort of chorus on what has just been done. Heraud makes a just comment upon it: "The Poet might have justified the act by the supposed barbarity of the legendary age whose manners he was tracing, and urged that their familiarity with such acts prevented the actors in them from recognizing the horrible. No such thing. By inserting in the group a servant who *did* recognize its intrinsic horror, and compassionated the sufferer, he converted disgust into pity. The valiant menial revenges on the spot the wrong done to humanity. The other servants also compassionate the blind old man, to lead him out, to help him, to heal his wounds, and to place him in safe custody. The entire

3 Serv. If she live long,
And in the end meet the old course of death,
Women will all turn monsters.

2 Serv. Let's follow the old Earl, and get the Bedlam
To lead him where he would: his roguish madness
Allows itself to any thing.

3 Serv. Go thou: I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs,
T' apply to his bleeding face. Now, Heaven help him!
[*Exeunt severally.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I. — *The Heath.*

Enter EDGAR.

Edg. Yet better thus, unknown, to be contemn'd,
Than still contemn'd and flatter'd. To be worst,
The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,[1]
Stands still in esperance,[2] lives not in fear:
The lamentable change is from the best;
The worst returns to laughter.[3] Welcome, then,
Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace!
The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst
Owes nothing to thy blasts.[4] But who comes here?

current of feeling is turned in the direction of pity by the force of sympathy. Thus the horror in the 'horrid act' is mitigated, and reduced to the level of terror."

[1] "Dejected thing of fortune" is thing *cast down by* fortune.

[2] *Esperance* is *hope*; from the French. Used repeatedly by the Poet.

[3] Because, when the worst has come, there can be no further change but for the better.

[4] "Is not indebted to thy blasts for any favour shown him: they have done their worst upon him, and so absolved him from all obligations."

Enter GLOSTER, *led by an old Man.*

My father, poorly led? — World, world, O world!
But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,
Life would not yield to age.[5]

Old Man. O my good lord, I have been your tenant, and your father's tenant, these fourscore years.

Glos. Away, get thee away; good friend, be gone:
Thy comforts can do me no good at all;
Thee they may hurt.

Old Man. Alack, sir, you cannot see your way.

Glos. I have no way, and therefore want no eyes:
I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen,
Our maims secure us, and our mere[6] defects
Prove our commodities. — O dear son Edgar,
The food of thy abusèd[7] father's wrath!
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,
I'd say I had eyes again!

Old Man. How now! Who's there?

Edg. [*Aside.*] O gods! Who is't can say, *I'm at the worst?* I'm worse than e'er I was.

Old Man. 'Tis poor mad Tom.

Edg. [*Aside.*] And worse I may be yet: the worst is not. So long as we can say *This is the worst.*[8]

[5] The meaning seems to be, "Did not thy calamitous reverses make life a burden, old age would never be reconciled or resigned to death."

[6] Shakespeare repeatedly has *very* in the sense of *mere*: here he has *mere* in the sense of *very*. — *Maim* was often used for any defect, blemish, or imperfection, whether "in mind, body, or estate." So Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book V., Sect. 65: "If men of so good experience and insight in the *maims* of our weak flesh, have thought," &c. Also, Sect. 24: "In a minister ignorance and disability to teach is a *maim*."

[7] *Abused* for *deceived* or *deluded*. A frequent usage.

[8] Because we must still be living, else we could not speak. Edgar at first

Old Man. Fellow, where goest?
Glos. Is it a beggar-man?
Old Man. Madman and beggar too.
Glos. He has some reason, else he could not beg.
I' the last night's storm I such a fellow saw;
Which made me think a man a worm: my son
Came then into my mind;[9] and yet my mind
Was then scarce friends with him: I've heard more since.
As flies to wanton boys, are we to th' gods;
They kill us for their sport.
Edg. [*Aside.*] How should this be?
Bad is the trade that must play Fool to sorrow,
Angering itself and others.[10] — Bless thee, master!
Glos. Is that the naked fellow?
Old Man. Ay, my lord.
Glos. Then, pr'ythee, get thee gone: if, for my sake,
Thou wilt o'ertake us, hence a mile or twain,
I' the way to Dover, do it for ancient love;
And bring some covering for this naked soul,
Whom I'll entreat to lead me.
Old Man. Alack, sir, he is mad.

thinks his condition already as bad as it can be: then the sight of his eyeless father adds a further woe; and now he concludes death to be the worst.

[9] This remembrance without recognition is a delectable touch of nature. Shakespeare has the same thing in several other cases; particularly the disguised Rosalind in the Forest of Arden, and the disguised Imogen, in *Cymbeline*, v. 5.

[10] *Angering* in the sense of *grieving;* a common use of *anger* in the Poet's time. So in St. Mark, iii. 5: "And when He had looked round about on them with *anger*, being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts." — "Playing the Fool to sorrow" means, apparently, acting the Fool's part, to divert off distressing thoughts, or to turn grief into laughter; which may well be painful to both parties. Any attempt to cheer the despondent by forced or affected mirth is apt to have the opposite effect.

Glos. 'Tis the time's plague, when madmen lead the blind.
Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure;
Above the rest, be gone.[11]

Old Man. I'll bring him the best 'parel that I have, come on't what will. [*Exit.*

Glos. Sirrah, naked fellow.

Edg. Poor Tom's a-cold. — [*Aside.*] I cannot daub[12] it further.

Glos. Come hither, fellow.

Edg. [*Aside.*] And yet I must. — Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.

Glos. Know'st thou the way to Dover?

Edg. Both stile and gate, horse-way and foot-path. Poor Tom hath been scared out of his good wits. Bless thee, good man's son, from the foul fiend! Five fiends have been in poor Tom at once; as Obidicut, of lust; Hobbididance, prince of dumbness; Mahu, of stealing; Modo, of murder; and Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mowing; who since possesses chambermaids and waitingwomen.[13] So, bless thee, master!

Glos. Here, take this purse, thou whom the Heaven's plagues
Have humbled to all strokes: that I am wretched

[11] This is said because Gloster is anxious for the old man's safety.

[12] To *daub* was sometimes used for to *disguise*. So in *King Richard III.*, iii. 5: "So smooth he *daub'd* his vice with show of virtue." And in like sort the Poet has *daubery* for *imposture*.

[13] "If she have a little helpe of the mother, epilepsie, or cramp, to teach her roll her eyes, wrie her mouth, gnash her teeth, starte with her body, hold her armes and handes stiffe, make antike faces, grinne, *mow and mop* like an ape, then no doubt the young girle is owle-blasted, and *possessed*." So says Harsnet. — To *mop* is to *mock*, to *chatter*; to *mow* is to *make mouths*, to *grimace*.

Makes thee the happier. — Heavens, deal so still!
Let the superfluous[14] and lust-dieted man,
That slaves your ordinance,[15] that will not see
Because he doth not feel, feel your power quickly;
So distribution should undo excess,
And each man have enough. — Dost thou know Dover?

Edg. Ay, master.

Glos. There is a cliff, whose high and bending head
Looks fearfully in the confinèd deep:
Bring me but to the very brim of it,
And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear
With something rich about me: from that place
I shall no leading need.

Edg. Give me thy arm:
Poor Tom shall lead thee. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. — *Before* ALBANY'S *Palace.*

Enter GONERIL *and* EDMUND.

Gon. Welcome, my lord:[1] I marvel our mild husband
Not met us on the way. —

Enter OSWALD.

Now, where's your master?

Osw. Madam, within; but never man so changed.

[14] *Superfluous*, here, probably means *over-clothed.* Gloster is thinking of those who live but to eat and drink, and to wear clothes and look fine; thus inverting the just order of things.

[15] To *slave* an ordinance is to make it subject to our pleasure, to *be-slave* it, instead of obeying it as law. So Middleton, in *The Roaring Girl:* "Fortune, who *slaves* men, was my slave."

[1] This is in proper sequel to the opening of the last scene of Act iii.; where Cornwall sends Edmund to escort Goneril home. She is now sweetly welcoming her escort to her palace, and inviting him to "walk in."

I told him of the army that was landed;
He smiled at it: I told him you were coming;
His answer was, *The worse:* of Gloster's treachery,
And of the loyal service of his son,
When I inform'd him, then he call'd me sot,
And told me I had turn'd the wrong side out.
What most he should dislike seems pleasant to him;
What like, offensive.

Gon. [*To* EDMUND.] Then shall you go no further.
It is the cowish terror of his spirit,
That dares not undertake: he'll not feel wrongs
Which tie him to an answer.[2] Our wishes on the way
May prove effects.[3] Back, Edmund, to my brother;
Hasten his musters and conduct his powers:
I must change arms at home, and give the distaff
Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant
Shall pass between us: ere long you're like to hear,
If you dare venture in your own behalf,
A mistress's command. Wear this; spare speech;

[*Giving a favour.*

Decline your head:[4] this kiss, if it durst speak,
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air:
Conceive, and fare thee well.

Edm. Yours in the ranks of death.

Gon. My most dear Gloster!—

[*Exit* EDMUND.

[2] The meaning is, that Albany, in his cowardice, *ignores* such wrongs and insults as a man of spirit would energetically resent; thus skulking from danger under a feigned insensibility.

[3] Those wishes of course were, that her ladyship were a widow, or at least free of marriage-bonds. She meditates killing her husband.

[4] She bids him decline his head, that she may give him a kiss, and yet make Oswald believe she is whispering to him.

O,
The difference of man and man! To thee
A woman's services are due; my fool
Usurps my bed.

Osw. Madam, here comes my lord. [*Exit.*

Enter ALBANY.

Gon. I have been worth the whistle.[5]

Alb. O Goneril!
You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
Blows in your face. I fear your disposition:
That nature which contemns its origin
Cannot be border'd certain in itself;[6]
She that herself will sliver and disbranch
From her material sap, perforce must wither,
And come to deadly use.[7]

Gon. No more; the text is foolish.

Alb. Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile:
Filths savour but themselves.[8] What have you done?

[5] Alluding to the proverb, "It is a poor dog that is not *worth the whistling*." Goneril thinks that her husband, knowing of her coming, ought to have sallied forth, with a retinue, to meet her, and give her a grand "welcome home."

[6] The meaning is, that the person who has reached such a pitch of unnaturalness as to scorn his parents, and trample on their infirmities, cannot be restrained within any certain bounds: there is nothing too bad for him to do. If Goneril will kill her father, whom will she not kill? Therefore Albany "fears her disposition."

[7] "Alluding," says Warburton, "to the use that witches and enchanters are said to make of *withered branches* in their charms. A fine insinuation in the speaker, that she was ready for the most unnatural mischief, and a preparative of the Poet to her plotting with Edmund against her husband's life." — "Come to *deadly* use" is, be put to *fatal* or *destructive* use, as being good only for the Devil to make an instrument of.

[8] That is, filths have a taste for nothing but filth, nothing but what is like themselves. "Birds of a feather flock together."

Tigers, not daughters, what have you perform'd?
A father, and a gracious agèd man,
Whose reverence the head-lugg'd bear[9] would lick,
Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you madded.
Could my good brother suffer you to do it?
A man, a prince, by him so benefited!
If that the Heavens do not their visible spirits
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,
It will come,
Humanity must perforce prey on itself,
Like monsters of the deep.[10]

Gon. Milk-liver'd man!
That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;
Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning
Thine honour from thy suffering; that not know'st
Fools do those villains pity who are punish'd
Ere they have done their mischief. Where's thy drum?
France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,
With plumèd helm thy state begins to threat;
Whilst thou, a moral fool,[11] sitt'st still, and criest
Alack, why does he so?

Alb. See thyself, devil!
Proper deformity shows not in the fiend
So horrid[12] as in woman.

[9] "*Head-lugg'd* bear" probably means a bear made savage by having his head *plucked* or *torn*.

[10] If the gods do not avenge these crimes, the crimes will avenge themselves by turning men into devourers of one another, or by inspiring humanity with a rage of self-destruction. A profound truth, and as awful as it is profound! often exemplified, too, in human history.

[11] By "a *moral* fool," this highly intellectual and strong-minded girl means a *moralizing* fool; one who prates, and spins long pious yarns about duty, and shirks the proper offices of manhood.

[12] That is, deformity, or depravity, appears less horrid in the fiend,

Gon. O vain fool!

Alb. Thou changèd and sex-cover'd thing,[13] for shame,
Be-monster not thy feature! [14] Were't my fitness
To let these hands obey my blood,
They're apt enough to dislocate and tear
Thy flesh and bones: howe'er[15] thou art a fiend,
A woman's shape doth shield thee.

Gon. Marry, your manhood mew! [16]

Enter a Messenger.

Alb. What news?

Mess. O, my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall's dead;
Slain by his servant, going to put out
The other eye of Gloster.

Alb. Gloster's eyes!

Mess. A servant that he bred, thrill'd with remorse,[17]
Opposed against the act, bending his sword
To his great master; who, thereat enraged,

because it is proper to him; is at home in him, and accords with the place.

[13] *Cover'd* in the sense of *shielded* or *defended*. So that the meaning is the same as "howe'er thou art a fiend, a *woman's* shape doth *shield* thee." — *Changèd* is *transformed*. Albany seems to regard his wife as having been metamorphosed from what he had seen or supposed her to be. — This explanation is Mr. Crosby's. See Critical Notes.

[14] The Poet repeatedly uses *feature* with reference to the whole form or person. And sometimes, as here, it carries the further sense of *proportion*, or *beauty of form*. So in *King Richard III.*, i. 1: "Cheated of *feature* by dissembling Nature." As Goneril is well endowed with formal beauty, her moral hideousness only makes her the more monstrous to the inward eye.

[15] Here, as often, *however* has the force of *although*.

[16] To *mew* is a term in falconry for to *confine*, to *keep in*, to *restrain*. Hawks, at a certain season, had to be *mewed up*, or confined in a *mew*, while growing a new crop of feathers. Of course Goneril uses the word as a spiteful taunt.

[17] Here, as usual in Shakespeare, *remorse* is *pity* or *compassion*.

Flew on him, and amongst them fell'd him dead ;[18]
But not without that harmful stroke which since
Hath pluck'd him after.

Alb. This shows you are above,
You justicers, that these our nether crimes
So speedily can venge ! — But, O poor Gloster !
Lost he his other eye?

Mess. Both, both, my lord. —
This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer ;
'Tis from your sister.

Gon. [*Aside.*] One way I like this well ;
But being widow, and my Gloster with her,
May all the building in my fancy pluck
Upon my hateful life.[19] Another way
The news is not so tart. — [*To the* Mess.] I'll read, and answer. [*Exit.*

Alb. Where was his son when they did take his eyes?

Mess. Come with my lady hither.

Alb. He's not here.

Mess. No, my good lord ; I met him back again.

Alb. Knows he the wickedness?

Mess. Ay, my good lord ; 'twas he inform'd against him ;
And quit the house on purpose, that their punishment
Might have the freer course.

[18] This may seem inconsistent with the matter as represented in a former scene, but it is not really so ; for, though Regan thrust the servant with a sword, a wound before received from Cornwall may have caused his death.

[19] Goneril likes this well, inasmuch as she has now but to make away with her sister and her husband by poison, and then the whole kingdom will be hers to share with Edmund, whom she intends to marry : but, on the other hand, Regan, being now a widow, and having Edmund with her, may win him by holding out a more practicable match ; and so the castle which Goneril has built in imagination may rush down upon her own head. "Building *in* my fancy" for building *of* my fancy.

Alb. Gloster, I live
To thank thee for the love thou show'dst the King,
And to revenge thine eyes. — Come hither, friend:
Tell me what more thou know'st. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. — *The French Camp near Dover.*

Enter KENT *and a* Gentleman.[1]

Kent. Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back, know you the reason?

Gent. Something he left imperfect in the State, which since his coming-forth is thought of; which imports to the kingdom so much fear and danger, that his personal return was most required and necessary.

Kent. Who hath he left behind him general?

Gent. The Marshal of France, Monsieur La Far.

Kent. Did your letters pierce the Queen to any demonstration of grief?

Gent. Ay, sir; she took them, read them in my presence;
And now and then an ample tear trill'd down
Her delicate cheek: it seem'd she was a queen
Over her passion, who, most rebel-like,
Sought to be king o'er her.

Kent. O, then it moved her.

Gent. Not to a rage; patience and sorrow strove
Who should express her goodliest. You have seen
Sunshine and rain at once; her smiles and tears
Were like: a better way,[2] — those happy smilets

[1] This is the same Gentleman whom in a previous scene Kent dispatched to Dover, with letters for Cordelia. See page 128, note 3.

[2] That is, her smiles and tears were like sunshine and rain at once; the sense being completed at *like*. He then proceeds to say the same thing again, in what he regards as "a better way." — *Smilets* is a diminutive of *smiles*: *semi-smiles* is nearly the force of it.

That play'd on her ripe lip seem'd not to know
What guests were in her eyes; which parted thence
As pearls from diamonds dropp'd. In brief, sir, sorrow
Would be a rarity most beloved, if all
Could so become it.

Kent. Made she no verbal question?[3]

Gent. Faith, once or twice she heaved the name of *father*
Pantingly forth, as if it press'd her heart;
Cried, *Sisters! sisters! Shame of ladies! sisters!*
Kent! father! sisters! What, i' the storm? i' the night?
Let pity not be believed![4] There she shook
The holy water from her heavenly eyes;
And, clamour-moisten'd,[5] then away she started
To deal with grief alone.

Kent. It is the stars,
The stars above us, govern our conditions;[6]
Else one self mate and mate could not beget
Such different issues. You spoke not with her since?

Gent. No.

Kent. Was this before the King return'd?

Gent. No, since.

Kent. Well, sir, the poor distressèd Lear's i' the town;
Who sometime, in his better tune, remembers
What we are come about, and by no means

[3] *Question* for *expression* or *utterance*. It is often met with in the kindred sense of *talk* or *conversation*. See *Hamlet*, page 110, note 49.

[4] The meaning appears to be, "Let pity not be believed *to exist*"; or "Let it not be supposed there is any such thing as pity in the human breast." It might well seem to Cordelia as if pity were dead indeed.

[5] An odd and not very happy expression; but meaning, apparently, that she wept aloud, or that her crying was drenched with tears.

[6] *Condition*, as usual, for *temper* or *disposition*. As Cordelia and her sisters had the same father and mother, Kent can only account for the difference in them by the astrological effects of "spherical predominance."

Will yield to see his daughter.

Gent. Why, good sir?

Kent. A sovereign shame so elbows him: his own unkindness,
That stripp'd her from his benediction, turn'd her
To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights
To his dog-hearted daughters, — these things sting
His mind so venomously, that burning shame
Detains him from Cordelia.

Gent. Alack, poor gentleman!

Kent. Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard not?

Gent. 'Tis so, they are afoot.

Kent. Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear,
And leave you to attend him. Some dear cause
Will in concealment wrap me up awhile:
When I am known aright, you shall not grieve
Lending me this acquaintance. I pray you, go
Along with me. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV. — *The Same. A Tent.*

Enter CORDELIA, Doctor, *and* Soldiers.

Cord. Alack, 'tis he: why, he was met even now
As mad as the vex'd sea; singing aloud;
Crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow weeds,
With burdocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,
Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
In our sustaining corn.[1] — A century[2] send forth;

[1] Called *sustaining*, probably because it sustains or feeds us, and so makes an apt antithesis to *idle weeds*, — *idle* as being *useless*.

[2] A *century* is, properly, a troop of a *hundred* men. Hence the commander of such a troop was called a *centurion*.

Search every acre in the high-grown field,
And bring him to our eye. [*Exit an* Officer.] — What can man's wisdom
In the restoring his bereavèd sense?
He that helps him take all my outward worth.

Doct. There is means, madam:
Our foster-nurse of nature is repose,
The which he lacks; that to provoke in him
Are many simples[3] operative, whose power
Will close the eye of anguish.

Cord. All bless'd secrets,
All you unpublish'd virtues of the Earth,
Spring with my tears! be aidant and remediate
In the good man's distress! — Seek, seek for him;
Lest his ungovern'd rage dissolve the life
That wants the means to lead it.

Enter a Messenger.

Mess. News, madam;
The British powers are marching hitherward.

Cord. 'Tis known before; our preparation stands
In expectation of them. — O dear father!
It is thy business that I go about;
Therefore great France
My mourning and important[4] tears hath pitied.
No blown[5] ambition doth our arms incite,
But love, dear love, and our aged father's right:
Soon may I hear and see him! [*Exeunt.*

[3] *Simples* properly means medicinal *herbs*, but was used for *medicines* in general. — For comment on this passage, see Introduction, page 34.

[4] *Important* for *importunate*. Repeatedly so.

[5] *Blown*, here, is *swollen, inflated, puffed*. See *Hamlet*, page 176, note 7.

SCENE V. — *A Room in* GLOSTER'S *Castle.*

Enter REGAN *and* OSWALD.

Reg. But are my brother's powers set forth?
Osw. Ay, madam.
Reg. Himself in person there?
Osw. Madam, with much ado:
Your sister is the better soldier.
Reg. Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?
Osw. No, madam.
Reg. What might import my sister's letter to him?
Osw. I know not, lady.
Reg. Faith, he is posted hence on serious matter.
It was great ignorance, Gloster's eyes being out,
To let him live: where he arrives he moves
All hearts against us: Edmund, I think, is gone,
In pity of his misery, to dispatch
His nighted life; moreover, to descry
The strength o' the enemy.
Osw. I must needs after him, madam, with my letter.
Reg. Our troops set forth to-morrow: stay with us;
The ways are dangerous.
Osw. I may not, madam:
My lady charged my duty in this business.
Reg. Why should she write to Edmund? Might not you
Transport her purposes by word? Belike,
Something — I know not what: I'll love thee much;
Let me unseal the letter.
Osw. Madam, I had rather —
Reg. I know your lady does not love her husband;
I'm sure of that: and at her late being here

She gave strange œilliads [1] and most speaking looks
To noble Edmund. I know you're of her bosom.[2]

Osw. I, madam?

Reg. I speak in understanding; you are, I know't:
Therefore I do advise you, take this note:[3]
My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talk'd;
And more convenient is he for my hand
Than for your lady's: you may gather more.[4]
If you do find him, pray you, give him this;[5]
And, when your mistress hears thus much from you,
I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her:[6]
So, fare you well.
If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,
Preferment[7] falls on him that cuts him off.

Osw. Would I could meet him, madam! I would show
What party I do follow.

Reg. Fare thee well. [*Exeunt.*

Scene VI. — *The Country near Dover.*

Enter Gloster, *and* Edgar *dressed like a* Peasant.

Glos. When shall I come to th' top of that same hill?

Edg. You do climb up it now: look, how we labour.

[1] That is, *eye-glances.* So in Cotgrave's *French Dictionary:* "Oeillade: An amorous looke, affectionate wink, wanton aspect, or passionate cast of the eye."

[2] In her *confidence;* or, as we should say, her bosom confidant.

[3] "Take note, or knowledge, of this." See page 128, note 3.

[4] "You may infer more than I have told you."

[5] Probably handing him a ring or some token for Edmund.

[6] Regan's cold, sharp, penetrating virulence is well shown in this. The meaning, in plain English, is, "Tell her to do her worst, and help herself, if she can."

[7] *Preferment* for *promotion* or *advancement.* Repeatedly so.

Glos. Methinks the ground is even.

Edg. Horrible steep.
Hark, do you hear the sea?

Glos. No, truly.

Edg. Why, then your other senses grow imperfect
By your eyes' anguish.

Glos. So may't be indeed:
Methinks thy voice is alter'd; and thou speak'st
In better phrase and matter than thou didst.

Edg. You're much deceived: in nothing am I changed
But in my garments.

Glos. Methinks you're better spoken.

Edg. Come on, sir; here's the place: stand still. How fearful
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles: half way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire,[1] — dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head:
The fishermen, that walk upon the beach,
Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark,
Diminish'd to her cock;[2] her cock, a buoy
Almost too small for sight: the murmuring surge,
That on th' unnumber'd[3] idle pebbles chafes,

[1] In Shakespeare's time the cliffs of Dover were noted for the production of this plant. It is thus spoken of in Smith's *History of Waterford*, 1774: "Samphire grows in great plenty on most of the sea-cliffs in this country. It is terrible to see how people gather it, *hanging by a rope* several fathom from the top of the impending rocks, as it were in the air." It was made into a pickle and eaten as a relish.

[2] That is, her *cock-boat*. Hence the term *cock-swain*.

[3] *Unnumber'd* for *innumerable;* a frequent usage in old writers, and not without examples now. See page 72, note 10.

Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more;
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong.

Glos. Set me where you stand.

Edg. Give me your hand. You're now within a foot
Of th' extreme verge: for all beneath the Moon
Would I not leap upright.[4]

Glos. Let go my hand.
Here, friend, 's another purse; in it a jewel
Well worth a poor man's taking: fairies and gods
Prosper it with thee! Go thou further off;
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

Edg. Now fare you well, good sir.

Glos. With all my heart.

Edg. [*Aside.*] Why I do trifle thus with his despair
Is done to cure it.

Glos. [*Kneeling.*] O you mighty gods!
This world I do renounce, and in your sights
Shake patiently my great affliction off:
If I could bear it longer, and not fall
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,
My snuff and loathèd part of nature should
Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O, bless him!—
Now, fellow, fare thee well.

Edg. Gone, sir: farewell.—
[GLOSTER *throws himself forward, and falls.*
[*Aside.*] And yet I know not how conceit may rob

[4] Heath's explanation is probably right: "This expression was purposely intended to heighten the horror of the description, and to affect the reader's imagination the more strongly. The spot is therefore represented as so extremely near the edge of the precipice, that there was the utmost hazard in leaping even upright upon it."

The treasury of life, when life itself
Yields to the theft.[5] Had he been where he thought,
By this had thought been past. — Alive or dead?
Ho you, sir, friend! — Hear you, sir? — speak! —
[*Aside.*] Thus might he pass indeed: yet he revives. —
What are you, sir?

Glos. Away, and let me die.

Edg. Hadst thou been ought but gossamer,[6] feathers, air,
So many fathom down precipitating,
Thou'dst shiver'd like an egg: but thou dost breathe;
Hast heavy substance; bleed'st not; speak'st; art sound.
Ten masts at each[7] make not the altitude
Which thou hast perpendicularly fell:
Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.

Glos. But have I fall'n, or no?

Edg. From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.
Look up a-height: the shrill-gorged[8] lark so far

[5] *Conceit* in its old sense of *conception* or *imagination*. — *How* must here be taken as equivalent to *whether* or *but that*. So that the meaning comes something thus: "When one is thus longing to die, I do not know but that the mere imagination of such a leap, or such a fall, might be the death of him." This accords with what Edgar says a little after: "Thus might he pass indeed." So in the Poet's dedication of his *Venus and Adonis* to the Earl of Southampton: "I know not *how* I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your lordship."

[6] The substance called *gossamer* is formed of the collected webs of spiders. Some think it the down of plants; others the vapour arising from boggy or marshy ground in warm weather. The etymon of this word is said to be *summer goose* or *summer gauze*, hence "gauze o' the summer."

[7] A strange expression, but meaning, perhaps, ten masts *joined each to the other*, or *drawn out* in length. This explanation, it is thought, may be justified by going to the original of *each*, which is from the Anglo-Saxon *eacan*, to *add*, to *augment*, or *lengthen*. *Eke*, sometimes spelt *eche*, is from the same source.

[8] *Shrill* is *loud*, as in *Julius Cæsar*, i. 2: "I hear a tongue, *shriller* than all the music, cry *Cæsar!*" "Shrill-*gorged*" is *loud-throated*, or *loud-voiced*.

Cannot be seen or heard: do but look up.

Glos. Alack, I have no eyes.
Is wretchedness deprived that benefit
To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort,
When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage,
And frustrate his proud will.

Edg. Give me your arm:
Up:—so. How is't? Feel you your legs? You stand.

Glos. Too well, too well.

Edg. This is above all strangeness.
Upon the crown o' the cliff, what thing was that
Which parted from you?

Glos. A poor unfortunate beggar.

Edg. As I stood here below, methought his eyes
Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses,
Horns whelk'd and waved like the enridgèd sea:[9]
It was some fiend. Therefore, thou happy father,
Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours
Of men's impossibilities,[10] have preserved thee.

Glos. I do remember now: henceforth I'll bear
Affliction till it do cry out itself
Enough, enough, and die. That thing you speak of,
I took it for a man; often 'twould say
The fiend, the fiend! he led me to that place.

Edg. Bear free and patient thoughts.—But who comes here?

[9] *Whelk'd* is marked with protuberances. The *whelk* is a small shell-fish, so called, perhaps, because its shell is marked with convolved protuberant ridges.—The sea is *enridged* when blown into *waves*.

[10] *Men's impossibilities* are things that seem to men impossible.—The incident of Gloster being made to believe himself ascending, and leaping from, the chalky cliff has always struck me as a very notable case of inherent improbability overcome in effect by opulence of description.

Enter LEAR, *fantastically dressed with Flowers.*

The safer sense will ne'er accommodate
His master thus.[11]

Lear. No, they cannot touch me for coining; I am the King himself:

Edg. [*Aside.*] O thou side-piercing sight!

Lear. — nature's above art in that respect. — There's your press-money.[12] That fellow handles his bow like a crow-keeper:[13] — draw me a clothier's yard. — Look, look, a mouse! Peace, peace; — this piece of toasted cheese will do't. — There's my gauntlet; I'll prove it on a giant. — Bring up the brown bills. — O, well flown, bird! — I' the clout, i' the clout: hewgh! — Give the word.[14]

Edg. Sweet marjoram.

Lear. Pass.

Glos. I know that voice.

[11] In the Poet's time *his* was constantly used where we should use *its*. *His* here evidently refers to *sense*. Edgar is speaking of Lear's fantastical dressing, and judges from this that he is not in his *safer sense;* that is, in his *senses*.

[12] Lear, I suppose, here imagines himself a recruiting officer, *impressing* men into the service, and paying them the bounty-money.

[13] A *crow-keeper* is a thing to keep the crows off the corn; what we call a *scare-crow;* which was sometimes a figure of a man, with a cross-bow in his hands. — "Draw me a clothier's yard" means draw me an arrow *the length* of a clothier's yard; the force of an arrow depending on the length it was drawn in the bow.

[14] The old King is here raving of a challenge, a battle, of falconry, and archery, jumbled together in quick succession. When he says "There's my gauntlet," he is a champion throwing down his glove by way of challenge. When he says "Give the word," he is a sentinel on guard, demanding the watchword or countersign. *Brown bill* is an old term for a kind of *battle-axe;* here put for men armed with that weapon. *Well flown, bird,* was the falconer's expression when the hawk made a good flight. *The clout* is the *white mark* at which archers aim.

Lear. Ha! Goneril, — with a white beard! — They flatter'd me like a dog; and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there. To say *ay* and *no* to every thing that I said *ay* and *no* to, was no good divinity.[15] When the rain came to wet me once, and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not peace at my bidding; there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to; they are not men o' their words: they told me I was every thing; 'tis a lie, — I am not ague-proof.

Glos. The trick[16] of that voice I do well remember: Is't not the King?

Lear. Ay, every inch a king:
When I do stare, see how the subject quakes!
I pardon that man's life. — What was thy cause?
Adultery? Thou shalt not die:
Die for adultery! No: for Gloster's bastard son
Was kinder to his father than my daughters.
But to the girdle do the gods inherit;[17]
Beneath is all the fiends':
There's Hell, there's darkness, there's the sulphurous pit, burning, scalding, stench, consumption; — fie, fie, fie! pah, pah! — Give me an ounce of civet,[18] good apothecary, to sweeten my imagination: there's money for thee.

Glos. O, let me kiss that hand!

[15] To tie our assent and dissent entirely to another, to speak nothing but in echo of his *yes* and *no*, is the extreme of sycophancy; and may well be called "no good divinity."

[16] *Trick*, here, is *peculiarity* or *characteristic*. Repeatedly so. So in *The Winter's Tale*, ii. 3: "The trick of 's frown."

[17] *Inherit* in its old sense of *possess*. See *King Richard II.*, page 42, note 20. So in "Blessed are the meek; for they shall *inherit* the earth."

[18] *Civet* is the old name of a musky perfume; obtained from what is called the civet-cat. So, in iii. 4, Lear says to Edgar, "Thou owest the worm no silk, the *cat* no *perfume*."

Lear. Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.

Glos. O ruin'd piece of nature! This great world
Shall so wear out to nought. — Dost thou know me?

Lear. I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou squiny at me? No, do thy worst, blind Cupid; I'll not love. Read thou this challenge; mark but the penning of it.

Glos. Were all the letters suns, I could not see.

Edg. [*Aside.*] I would not take this from report: it is,
And my heart breaks at it.

Lear. Read.

Glos. What, with the case of eyes?

Lear. O, ho! are you there with me? No eyes in your head, nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are in a heavy case, your purse in a light: yet you see how this world goes.

Glos. I see it feelingly.

Lear. What, art mad? A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears: see how yond justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark, in thine ear: change places; and, handy-dandy,[19] which is the justice, which is the thief? Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

Glos. Ay, sir.

Lear. And the creature run from the cur? There thou mightst behold the great image of authority: a dog's obey'd in office. —
Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!

[19] *Handy-dandy* is an old game of children; one child enclosing something in his hand, and using a sort of legerdemain, changing it swiftly from hand to hand, and then calling upon his playfellow to guess which hand it is in; the latter to have the thing, if he guesses right.

Strip thine own back.[20] — The usurer hangs the cozener.[21]
Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;
Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw doth pierce it.
None does offend, none; I say, none; I'll able 'em.[22] —
Take that of me, my friend, who have the power
To seal th' accuser's lips. — Get thee glass eyes;
And, like a scurvy politician, seem
To see the things thou dost not. — Now, now, now, now!
Pull of my boots; — harder, harder; — so.

Edg. [*Aside.*] O, matter and impertinency mix'd!
Reason in madness!

Lear. If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.
I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloster:
Thou must be patient; we came crying hither:
Thou know'st, the first time that we smell the air,
We wawl and cry.[23] I'll preach to thee: mark me.

Glos. Alack, alack the day!

Lear. When we are born, we cry that we are come
To this great stage of fools. — 'Tis a good block: —
It were a delicate stratagem to shoe
A troop of horse with felt:[24] I'll put 't in proof;

[20] These words must be understood as inferring that the beadle is himself guilty of the very crime for which he is whipping another.

[21] *Cozener* and to *cozen* were much used in the Poet's time, and are not entirely out of use yet. To *cozen* is to *cheat*, to *swindle*

[22] "I will *cancel* their *disability*"; or, "I will *warrant* or *answer for* them."

[23] This may have been taken from Pliny, as translated by Holland: "Man alone, poor wretch, nature hath laid all naked upon the bare earth, even on his birthday to *cry and wrawle* presently from the very first houre that he is borne into this world."

[24] So in Fenton's *Tragical Discourses*, 1567: "He attyreth himself for the purpose in a night-gowne girt to hym, with a payre of *shoes of felte*,

And when I've stol'n upon these sons-in-law,
Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill![25]

Enter a Gentleman, *with* Attendants.

Gent. O, here he is: lay hands upon him. — Sir,
Your most dear daughter —

Lear. No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even
The natural fool of fortune. — Use me well;
You shall have ransom. Let me have a surgeon;
I'm cut to th' brains.

Gent. You shall have any thing.

Lear. No seconds? All myself?
Why, this would make a man a man of salt,[26]
To use his eyes for garden water-pots,
Ay, and for laying Autumn's dust.

Gent. Good sir, —

Lear. I will die bravely, like a smug[27] bridegroom. What!
I will be jovial. Come, come; I am a king,
My masters: know you that?

Gent. You are a royal one, and we obey you.

leaste the noyse of his feete might discover his goinge." — When Lear goes to preaching he takes off his hat and holds it in his hand, as preachers were wont to do in the Poet's time. "'Tis a good *block*" doubtless refers to the *shape* or *form* of the *hat*. As he is holding the hat in his hand, or perhaps moulding it into some new shape, the thought strikes him what the hat is made of, and he starts off upon the stratagem of shoeing a troop of horses with *felt*. This use of *block* is well illustrated by a passage in Dekker's *Gull's Hornbook*, 1609: "That cannot observe the tune of his hatband, nor know what fashioned *block* is most kin to his head; for in my opinion the brain cannot chuse his *felt* well."

[25] This was the cry formerly in the English army when an onset was made on the enemy.

[26] Would turn a man all to brine; that is, to *tears*.

[27] *Smug* is *spruce*, *trim*, *fine*. So in *The Merchant of Venice*, iii. 1: "A beggar, that was used to come so *smug* upon the mart."

Lear. Then there's life in't.[28] Nay, an you get it, you shall get it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa.[29]

[*Exit, running;* Attendants *follow.*

Gent. A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch;
Past speaking of in a king! — Thou hast one daughter,
Who redeems nature from the general curse
Which twain have brought her to.

Edg. Hail, gentle sir!

Gent. Sir, speed you: what's your will?

Edg. Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward?

Gent. Most sure and vulgar:[30] every one hears that,
Which can distinguish sound.

Edg. But, by your favour,
How near's the other army?

Gent. Near, and on speedy foot; the main descry
Stands on the hourly thought.[31]

Edg. I thank you, sir: that's all.

Gent. Though that the Queen on special cause is here,
Her army is moved on.

Edg. I thank you, sir. [*Exit* Gent.

Glos. You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me;
Let not my worser spirit tempt me again
To die before you please!

Edg. Well pray you, father.[32]

Glos. Now, good sir, what are you?

[28] There is hope in it yet; the case is not desperate.

[29] These syllables are probably meant for Lear's panting as he runs.

[30] *Vulgar* in its old sense of *common*. A frequent usage.

[31] The main body is expected to be descried every hour. — "On speedy foot" is marching rapidly, or footing it fast.

[32] It was customary for young people to address an aged person as father or mother. Hence Edgar keeps addressing Gloster so without being recognized as his son.

Edg. A most poor man, made tame to fortune's blows;
Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,
Am pregnant[33] to good pity. Give me your hand;
I'll lead you to some biding.

Glos. Hearty thanks;
The bounty and the benison of Heaven
To boot, and boot![34]

Enter OSWALD.

Osw. A proclaim'd prize! Most happy!
That eyeless head of thine was first framed flesh
To raise my fortunes. — Thou old unhappy traitor,
Briefly thyself remember:[35] the sword is out
That must destroy thee.

Glos. Now let thy friendly hand
Put strength enough to it. [EDGAR *interposes.*

Osw. Wherefore, bold peasant,
Darest thou support a publish'd traitor? Hence;
Lest that th' infection of his fortune take
Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.

[33] *Pregnant*, here, is *quick, prompt, ready.* Repeatedly so. — *Biding*, in the next line, is *lodging*, or *abiding-place.*

[34] Edgar, the champion of right, ever active in opposing evil and advancing the good cause, discovers that the gods are upon the side of right, are unceasingly at work in the vindication of truth, and the execution of justice. His faith lives through trial and disaster, a flame which will not be quenched. And he buoys up, by virtue of his own energy of soul, the spirit of his father, which, unprepared for calamity, is staggering blindly, stunned from its power to think, and ready to sink into darkness, and welter in chaotic disbelief. Gloster, in his first confusion, exclaims bitterly against the divine government: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport." But, before the end has come, he "shakes patiently his great affliction off"; he will not quarrel with the "great opposeless will" of the gods; nay, more than this, he can identify his will with theirs, he can accept life contentedly at their hands, or death. — DOWDEN.

[35] "*Quickly* call to mind thy past offences, and repent."

Edg. Ch'ill not let go, zir, without vurther 'casion.

Osw. Let go, slave, or thou diest!

Edg. Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor volk pass. An ch'ud ha' been zwagger'd out of my life, 'twould not ha' been zo long as 'tis by a vortnight.[36] Nay, come not near th' old man; keep out, che vor'ye, or ise try whether your costard or my ballow be the harder.[37] Ch'ill be plain with you.

Osw. Out, dunghill!

Edg. Ch'ill pick your teeth, zir: come; no matter for your foins.[38] [*They fight;* EDGAR *knocks him down.*

Osw. Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse:
If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body;
And give the letters which thou find'st about me
To Edmund Earl of Gloster: seek him out
Upon the British party. — O, untimely death! [*Dies.*

Edg. I know thee well: a serviceable villain;
As duteous to the vices of thy mistress
As badness would desire.

Glos. What, is he dead?

Edg. Sit you down, father; rest you.
Let's see his pockets: these letters that he speaks of
May be my friends. He's dead: I'm only sorry
He had no other death's-man. — Let us see:
Leave, gentle wax; and, manners, blame us not:
To know our enemies' minds, we'd rip their hearts;
Their papers, is more lawful.

[36] "If I could have been swaggered out of my life, 'twould not have been so long as it is by a fortnight."

[37] "Keep out, *I warn you*, or I'll try whether your *head* or my *cudgel* be the harder." Edgar here speaks the Somersetshire dialect.

[38] *Foins* are *thrusts*, or passes in fencing. The Poet has the verb to *foin*.

[Reads.] *Let our reciprocal vows be remember'd. You have many opportunities to cut him off: if your will want not, time and place will be fruitfully offer'd. There is nothing done, if he return the conqueror: then am I the prisoner, and his bed my jail; from the loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your labour.*

Your (wife, so I would say)
affectionate Servant, GONERIL.

O undistinguish'd space of woman's will![39]
A plot upon her virtuous husband's life;
And the exchange, my brother! — Here, in the sands,
Thee I'll rake up,[40] the post unsanctified
Of murderous lechers; and, in the mature time,
With this ungracious paper strike the sight
Of the death-practised Duke: for him 'tis well
That of thy death and business I can tell.

Glos. The King is mad: how stiff is my vile sense,
That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling[41]
Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract:
So should my thoughts be sever'd from my griefs;
And woes, by wrong imaginations, lose
The knowledge of themselves.[42] [*Drum afar off.*

Edg. Give me your hand:

[39] *Undistinguish'd* for *indistinguishable*, as, before, *unnumber'd* for *innumerable*. The meaning probably is, that woman's will has no distinguishable bounds, or no assignable limits; there is no telling what she will do, or where she will stop.

[40] That is, "*cover* thee up." Singer says that in Staffordshire to *rake* the fire is to cover it for the night. So 'tis in New England.

[41] *Ingenious* is *intelligent, lively, acute*. Warburton says, "*Ingenious feeling* signifies a feeling from an understanding not disturbed or disordered, but which, representing things as they are, makes the sense of pain the more exquisite."

[42] As the woes or sufferings of madmen are lost in imaginary felicities.

Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum.
Come, father; I'll bestow you with a friend. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII. — *A Tent in the French Camp.*

LEAR *on a Bed, asleep; soft Music playing; a* Doctor, *a* Gentleman, *and Others attending.*

Enter CORDELIA *and* KENT.

Cord. O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work,
To match thy goodness? My life will be too short,
And every measure fail me.

Kent. To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid.
All my reports go with the modest truth;
Nor more, nor clipp'd, but so.[1]

Cord. Be better suited:
These weeds are memories[2] of those worser hours:
I pr'ythee, put them off.

Kent. Pardon me, dear madam;
Yet to be known shortens my made intent:[3]
My boon I make it, that you know me not
Till time and I think meet.

Cord. Then be't so, my good lord. — [*To the* Doct.] How does the King?

Doct. Madam, sleeps still.

[1] "My reports are neither *exaggerated* nor *curtailed*: neither more nor less than the modest truth."

[2] "Better *suited*" is better *dressed*. — The Poet often has *memory* in the sense of *memorial* or *remembrance*. So, in *As You Like It*, ii. 3, the old man Adam says to Orlando, "O you *memory* of old Sir Roland!" — *Weeds* is an old word for *clothes*.

[3] A *made* intent is an intent *formed*. We say in common language to *make* a design, and to *make* a resolution. See Critical Notes.

Cord. O you kind gods,
Cure this great breach in his abusèd nature!
Th' untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up
Of this child-changèd father![4]

Doct. So please your Majesty
That we may wake the King? he hath slept long.

Cord. Be govern'd by your knowledge, and proceed
I' the sway of your own will. Is he array'd?

Gent. Ay, madam; in the heaviness of his sleep
We put fresh garments on him.

Doct. Be by, good madam, when we do awake him:
I doubt not of his temperance.

Cord. Very well.

Doct. Please you, draw near. — Louder the music there.[5]

Cord. O my dear father, restoration hang
Thy medicine on my lips;[6] and let this kiss
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
Have in thy reverence made!

Kent. Kind and dear Princess!

Cord. Had you not been their father, these white flakes
Had challenged pity of them. Was this a face

[4] So *care-crazed*, crazed *by* care; *woe-wearied*, wearied *by* woe.

[5] Shakespeare considered *soft music* as favourable to sleep. Lear, we may suppose, had been thus composed to rest; and now the Doctor desires *louder* music to be played, for the purpose of waking him. This notion as to the effect of soft music is not peculiar to the Poet. So in *Wit Restored*, 1658:—

> O, lull me, lull me, charming air,
> My senses rock'd with wonder sweet;
> Like snow on wool thy fallings are,
> Soft like a spirit are thy feet.

[6] In "Thy medicine," *Thy* may refer either to *father* or to *restoration*. I understand it as referring to *father*: "*May* restoration hang thy medicine on my lips!" Some, however, understand Cordelia as apostrophizing restoration.

To be opposed against the warring winds?
To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder?
In the most terrible and nimble stroke
Of quick, cross lightning? to watch — poor perdu!—
With this thin helm?[7] Mine enemy's dog,
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
Against my fire;[8] and wast thou fain, poor father,
To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn,
In short and musty straw? Alack, alack!
'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once
Had not concluded all.[9] — He wakes; speak to him.

Doct. Madam, do you; 'tis fittest.

Cord. How does my royal lord? How fares your Majesty?

Lear. You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave:
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that[10] mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead.

Cord. Sir, do you know me?

[7] This thin *helmet* of "white flakes," or *gray hair*. The allusion is to the forlorn hope of an army, called in French *enfans perdus;* who, among other desperate services, often engage in night-watches. So in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Little French Lawyer:* "I am set here like a *perdu*, to *watch* a fellow that has wrong'd my mistress."

[8] Verplanck tells us that Jarvis, the American painter-artist, used often to quote this passage as accumulating in the shortest compass the greatest causes of dislike, to be overcome by good-natured pity. "It is not merely the personal enemy, for whom there might be human sympathy, that is admitted to the family fireside, but his dog, and that a dog that had inflicted his own share of personal injury, and that, too, upon a gentle being from whom it was not possible that he could have received any provocation."

[9] *All* may here be taken as going with the subject: "'Tis wonder that thy life and wits had not all concluded" — *ended* — "at once." Probably, however, *all* is here put for *altogether*. Spenser very often has it so.

[10] The Poet very often uses *that* for *so that*, or *insomuch that*.

Lear. You are a spirit, I know: when did you die?
Cord. Still, still, far wide!
Doct. He's scarce awake: let him alone awhile.
Lear. Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?
I'm mightily abused.[11] I should even die with pity,
To see another thus. I know not what to say.
I will not swear these are my hands: let's see;
I feel this pin prick. Would I were assured
Of my condition!
Cord. O, look upon me, sir!
And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.[12]
No, sir, you must not kneel.
Lear. Pray, do not mock me:
I am a very foolish fond old man,
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;
And, to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
Methinks I should know you, and know this man;
Yet I am doubtful: for I'm mainly[13] ignorant
What place this is; and all the skill I have
Remembers not these garments; nor I know not
Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me;
For, as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child Cordelia.

11 To *lead astray* with illusions is an old meaning of *abuse*.

12 A parent's curse was a dreadful thing with our ancestors; and so Cordelia longs first of all to have her father revoke the curse he pronounced upon her in the opening of the play. She had not learned to act as if "a man were author of himself, and knew no other kin."

13 Shakespeare sometimes uses *mainly* for *greatly*, *strongly*, or *mightily*. So Falstaff says, "These four came all a-front, and *mainly* thrust at me." See, also, *Hamlet*, page 189, note 1.

Cord. And so I am, I am.

Lear. Be your tears wet? Yes, 'faith. I pray, weep not:
If you have poison for me, I will drink it.
I know you do not love me; for your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:
You have some cause, they have not.

Cord. No cause, no cause.

Lear. Am I in France?

Kent. In your own kingdom, sir.

Lear. Do not abuse me.

Doct. Be comforted, good madam: the great rage,
You see, is cured in him; and yet 'tis danger
To make him even o'er the time he has lost.[14]
Desire him to go in; trouble him no more
Till further settling.

Cord. Will't please your Highness walk?

Lear. You must bear with me:
Pray you now, forget and forgive: I'm old and foolish.

[*Exeunt all but* KENT *and* Gentleman.

Gent. Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall was so slain?

Kent. Most certain, sir.

Gent. Who is conductor of his people?

Kent. As 'tis said, the bastard son of Gloster.

Gent. They say Edgar, his banish'd son, is with the Earl of Kent in Germany.

Kent. Report is changeable. 'Tis time to look about; the powers of the kingdom approach apace.

[14] "Even o'er the time" here means *try to account for* the time, or to make the last day of his remembering tally or fit in with the present.

Gent. The arbitrement is like to be bloody. Fare you well, sir. [*Exit.*

Kent. My point and period will be throughly[15] wrought,
Or well or ill, as this day's battle's fought. [*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I. — *The British Camp, near Dover.*

Enter, with Drum and Colours, EDMUND, REGAN, Officers, Soldiers, *and Others.*

Edm. Know of the Duke if his last purpose hold,
Or whether since he is advised by aught
To change the course.[1] He's full of alteration
And self-reproving: bring his constant pleasure.
[*To an* Officer, *who goes out.*

Reg. Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.

Edm. 'Tis to be doubted,[2] madam.

Reg. Now, sweet lord,
You know the goodness I intend upon you:
Tell me, — but truly, — but then speak the truth,
Do you not love my sister?

Edm. In honour'd love.

[15] *Throughly* and *thoroughly*, as also *through* and *thorough*, were used interchangeably in Shakespeare's time. So in St. Matthew, iii. 12: "He will *throughly* purge his floor." See, also, *Hamlet*, page 183, note 21.

[1] A military commander is apt, especially on the eve of a battle, to vary his orders frequently, or to give out an order one hour, and to countermand it the next, as he receives further intelligence of the enemy's movements. Hence, to his subordinates, he often seems not to know his own mind; and his second order appears to *reprove* his first.

[2] Here, as often, *doubted* has the sense of *feared*. The same with *doubtful* in the third speech below.

Reg. I am doubtful that you have been conjunct
And bosom'd with her, as far as we call hers.[3]
Edm. No, by mine honour, madam.
Reg. I never shall endure her: dear my lord,
Be not familiar with her.
Edm. Fear me not: —
She and the Duke her husband!

Enter, with Drum and Colours, ALBANY, GONERIL, *and* Soldiers.

Gon. [*Aside.*] I had rather lose the battle than that sister
Should loosen him and me.
Alb. Our very loving sister, well be-met. —
Sir, this I hear, — the King is come to his daughter,
With others whom the rigour of our State
Forced to cry out. Where I could not be honest,
I never yet was valiant: for this business,
It toucheth us, as France invades our land,
Not bolds the King,[4] with others, whom, I fear,
Most just and heavy causes make oppose.
Edm. Sir, you speak nobly.
Reg. Why is this reason'd?[5]
Gon. Combine together 'gainst the enemy;
For these domestic and particular broils
Are not the question here.

[3] Probably meaning, as far as she has any favours to bestow.

[4] To *bold* was sometimes used as a transitive verb for to *encourage* or *embolden*. Albany means that the invasion touches him, not as it is a befriending of the old King, and aims to reinstate him in the throne, but as it threatens the independence of the kingdom. — *With* has simply the force of *and*, connecting *others* and *King*.

[5] "Why is this *talked about?*" To *talk*, to *converse* is an old meaning of to *reason*. Shakespeare has it repeatedly so.

Alb. Let's, then, determine
With the ancient of war on our proceedings.[6]

Edm. I shall attend you[7] presently at your tent.

Reg. Sister, you'll go with us?

Gon. No.

Reg. 'Tis most convenient; pray you, go with us.

Gon. [*Aside.*] O, ho, I know the riddle. — I will go.

Enter EDGAR *disguised.*

Edg. If e'er your Grace had speech with man so poor,
Hear me one word.

Alb. I'll overtake you. — Speak.

[*Exeunt all but* ALBANY *and* EDGAR.

Edg. Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.
If you have victory, let the trumpet sound
For him that brought it: wretched though I seem,
I can produce a champion that will prove
What is avouchèd there. If you miscarry,
Your business of the world hath so an end,
And machination ceases.[8] Fortune love you!

Alb. Stay till I've read the letter.

Edg. I was forbid it.
When time shall serve, let but the herald cry,
And I'll appear again.

Alb. Why, fare thee well: I will o'erlook thy paper.

[*Exit* EDGAR.

[6] This is meant as a proposal, or an order, to hold a council of *veteran* warriors for determining what course to pursue.

[7] Edmund means that he will soon *join* Albany at his tent, instead of going *along with* him. So the Poet often uses *attend*. In what follows, Goneril lingers, to keep with Edmund; and this at once starts Regan's suspicions. When Regan urges Goneril to go along with them, the latter instantly guesses the cause, — the *riddle*, — and replies, "I will go." Very intellectual ladies! "Dragons in the prime, that tear each other in their slime."

[8] "All plottings or designs against your life have an end."

Re-enter EDMUND.

Edm. The enemy's in view; draw up your powers.
Here is the guess of their true strength and forces
By diligent discovery: but your haste
Is now urged on you.

Alb. We will greet the time.[9] [*Exit.*

Edm. To both these sisters have I sworn my love;
Each jealous of the other, as the stung
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?
Both? one? or neither? Neither can be enjoy'd,
If both remain alive: to take the widow
Exasperates, makes mad, her sister Goneril;
And hardly shall I carry out my side,[10]
Her husband being alive. Now, then, we'll use
His countenance for the battle; which being done,
Let her who would be rid of him devise
His speedy taking-off. As for the mercy
Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia, —
The battle done, and they within our power,
Shall never see his pardon; for my state
Stands on me to defend, not to debate. [*Exit.*

SCENE II. — *A Field between the two Camps.*

Alarum within. Enter, with Drum and Colours, LEAR, CORDELIA, *and their* Forces; *and exeunt.*

Enter EDGAR *and* GLOSTER.

Edg. Here, father, take the shadow of this tree

[9] "We will be ready for the occasion, or at hand to welcome it."

[10] "I shall hardly be able to make out my game." In the language of the card-table, to *set up a side* was to become partners in a game; and to *carry out a side* was to win or succeed in the game.

For your good host:[1] pray that the right may thrive.
If ever I return to you again,
I'll bring you comfort.

Glos. Grace go with you, sir!

[*Exit* EDGAR.

Alarum and Retreat within. Re-enter EDGAR.

Edg. Away, old man, — give me thy hand, — away!
King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter ta'en:
Give me thy hand; come on.

Glos. No further, sir; a man may rot even here.

Edg. What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither:
Ripeness is all:[2] come on.

Glos. And that's true too. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. — *The British Camp, near Dover.*

Enter, in Conquest, with Drum and Colours, EDMUND; LEAR *and* CORDELIA Prisoners; Officers, Soldiers, *&c.*

Edm. Some officers take them away: good guard,
Until their greater pleasures first be known
That are to censure them.[3]

Cord. We're not the first
Who, with best meaning, have incurr'd the worst.
For thee, oppressèd King, am I cast down;

[1] A rather strange use of *host;* but Shakespeare has at least two instances of *host* used as a verb for to *lodge*.

[2] *Ripeness*, here, is *preparedness* or *readiness*. So Hamlet, on a like occasion, says "the *readiness* is all." And so the phrase, "Like a shock of corn *fully ripe*."

[3] "Their *greater pleasures*" means the pleasure of the *greater persons*. — Here, as usual, to *censure* is to *judge*, to *pass sentence*.

Myself could else outfrown false fortune's frown.
Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?

Lear. No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison:
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,
And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of Court news; and we'll talk with them too, —
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out;[4]
And take upon's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,
In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones,
That ebb and flow by th' Moon.

Edm. Take them away.

Lear. Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee?
He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,
And fire us hence like foxes.[5] Wipe thine eyes;
The goujeers shall devour them, flesh and fell,[6]
Ere they shall make us weep; we'll see 'em starve first.
Come. [*Exeunt* LEAR *and* CORDELIA, *guarded.*

Edm. Come hither, Captain; hark. [*Giving a paper.*
Take thou this note;[7] go follow them to prison:

[4] The old King refers to the intrigues and rivalries, the plottings and counter-plottings of courtiers, to get ahead of each other in the sovereign's favour. The swift vicissitudes of *ins* and *outs* in Court life was a common theme of talk in the Poet's time.

[5] Alluding to the old practice of smoking foxes out of their holes.

[6] *Goujeer* was the name of what was often spoken of in the Poet's time as the French disease; a disease noted for its effects in *eating away* certain parts of the body. — *Fell* is an old word for *skin.*

[7] This is a warrant signed by Edmund and Goneril, for the execution of Lear and Cordelia, referred to afterwards.

One step I have advanced thee; if thou dost
As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way
To noble fortunes. Know thou this, that men
Are as the time is: to be tender-minded
Does not become a sword. Thy great employment
Will not bear question:[8] either say thou'lt do't,
Or thrive by other means.

Capt. I'll do't, my lord.

Edm. About it; and write happy, when thou'st done.
Mark, — I say, instantly; and carry it so
As I have set it down.

Capt. I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats:
If't be man's work, I'll do't. [*Exit.*

Flourish. Enter ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, Officers, *and* Attendants.

Alb. Sir, you have shown to-day your valiant strain,[9]
And fortune led you well. You have the captives
Who were the opposites of this day's strife:
We do require them of you, so to use them
As we shall find their merits and our safety
May equally determine.

Edm. Sir, I thought it fit
To send the old and miserable King
To some retention and appointed guard;
Whose age has charms in it, whose title more,

[8] "The great employment now entrusted to thee will not admit of delay or scrupulous inquiry."

[9] *Strain* is repeatedly used by Shakespeare in the sense of *turn, aptitude,* or *inborn disposition;* like the Latin *indoles.* So in *The Merry Wives,* ii. 1: "Unless he know some *strain* in me, that I know not myself, he never would have boarded me in this fury." Also in iii. 3: "I would all of the same *strain* were in the same distress."

To pluck the common bosom on his side,
And turn our impress'd lances[10] in our eyes
Which do command them. With him I sent the Queen;
My reason all the same; and they are ready
To-morrow, or at further space, t' appear
Where you shall hold your session. At this time
We sweat and bleed: the friend hath lost his friend;
And the best quarrels, in the heat, are cursed
By those that feel their sharpness.[11]
The question of Cordelia and her father
Requires a fitter place.

Alb. Sir, by your patience,
I hold you but a subject of this war,
Not as a brother.

Reg. That's as we list to grace him:
Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded,
Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers;
Bore the commission of my place and person;
The which immediacy[12] may well stand up
And call itself your brother.

Gon. Not so hot:
In his own grace he doth exalt himself,

[10] *Lances* for soldiers armed with lances, as, before, *brown-bills* for men armed with battle-axes. — *Impress'd* referring to the men's having been pressed into the service, and received the "press-money."

[11] In a war, even those of the victorious side, those who have the *best* of it, curse the quarrel at first, while they feel its sharpness in the loss of friends, or perhaps in their own wounds.

[12] This apt and forcible word is probably of the Poet's own coinage. Nares says that "the word, so far as is known, is peculiar to this passage." Of course the meaning is, that Edmund has his commission *directly* from her, and not *through* any one else; that is, he is *her* lieutenant, not Albany's. So in *Hamlet* we have "the most *immediate* to the throne." *Commission* is here used in the sense of *authority*.

More than in your addition.

Reg. In my rights
By me invested, he compeers the best.

Gon. That were the most, if he should husband you.

Reg. Jesters do oft prove prophets.

Gon. Holla, holla!
That eye that told you so look'd but a-squint.[13]

Reg. Lady, I am not well; else I should answer
From a full-flowing stomach.[14] — General,
Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony;
Dispose of them, of me; yea, all is thine:
Witness the world that I create thee here
My lord and master.

Gon. Mean you to enjoy him?

Alb. The let-alone lies not in your good will.[15]

Edm. Nor in thine, lord.

Alb. Half-blooded fellow, yes!

Reg. [*To* EDMUND.] Let the drum strike, and prove my title thine.

Alb. Stay yet; hear reason. — Edmund, I arrest thee
On capital treason; and, in thy arrest,
This gilded serpent. [*Pointing to* GONER.] — For your claim, fair sister,
I bar it in the interest of my wife:
'Tis she is sub-contracted to this lord,
And I, her husband, contradict your banns.

[13] Alluding to the proverb, "Love being jealous makes a good eye look *a-squint*." So in Milton's *Comus:* "And gladly banish *squint suspicion*."

[14] Here, as often, *stomach* is *anger* or *resentment*.

[15] Well explained by Ritson: "Albany tells his wife that, however she might want the *power*, she evidently did not want the *inclination*, to prevent the match." In other words, "I see *you* would willingly stop it, if you could." A taunt to his wife, equivalent to "You want him yourself."

If you will marry, make your love to me;
My lady is bespoke.

Gon. An interlude![16]

Alb. Thou art arm'd, Gloster. Let the trumpet sound:
If none appear, to prove upon thy person
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,
There is my pledge: [*Throwing down a glove.*] I'll prove it on thy heart,
Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less
Than I have here proclaim'd thee.

Reg. Sick! O, sick!

Gon. [*Aside.*] If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine.

Edm. [*Throwing a glove.*] There's my exchange: what in the world he is
That names me traitor, villain-like he lies.
Call by thy trumpet: he that dares approach,
On him, on you, who not? I will maintain
My truth and honour firmly.

Alb. A herald, ho!

Edm. A herald, ho, a herald!

Alb. Trust to thy single virtue;[17] for thy soldiers,
All levied in my name, have in my name
Took their discharge.

Reg. My sickness grows upon me.

Alb. She is not well; convey her to my tent. —

[*Exit* REGAN, *led.*

Enter a Herald.

Come hither, herald. — Let the trumpet sound, —
And read out this.

[16] This is intended sarcastically; as if Albany had got up a play or a scene for the entertainment of the company.

[17] *Virtue* is used in the old Roman sense; for *valour.*

Off. Sound, trumpet! [*A Trumpet sounds.*

Her. [Reads.] *If any man of quality or degree within the lists of the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl of Gloster, that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear at the third sound of the trumpet: he is bold in his defence.*

Edm. Sound! [*1 Trumpet.*

Her. Again! [*2 Trumpet.*

Her. Again! [*3 Trumpet.*

[*Trumpet answers within.*

Enter EDGAR, *armed, preceded by a Trumpet.*

Alb. Ask him his purposes, why he appears
Upon this call o' the trumpet.[18]

Her. What are you?
Your name, your quality? and why you answer
This present summons?

Edg. Know, my name is lost;
By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit:
Yet am I noble as the adversary
I come to cope.

Alb. Which is that adversary?

Edg. What's he that speaks for Edmund Earl of Gloster?

Edm. Himself: what say'st thou to him?

Edg. Draw thy sword,
That, if my speech offend a noble heart,
Thy arm may do thee justice: here is mine.
Behold, it is the privilege of mine honours,
My oath, and my profession: I protest, —

[18] This is in accordance with the old ceremonial of the trial by combat in criminal cases. So stated in Selden's *Duello:* "The appellant and his procurator first come to the gate. The constable and marshal demand by voice of herald, what he is, and why he comes so arrayed." The same ceremonial is followed in detail in *King Richard II.*, i. 3.

Maugre thy strength, youth, place, and eminence,
Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,
Thy valour and thy heart, — thou art a traitor;
False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father;
Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious Prince;
And, from th' extremest upward of thy head
To the descent and dust beneath thy foot,
A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou *no*,
This sword, this arm, and my best spirits are bent
To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,
Thou liest.

Edm. In wisdom I should ask thy name;[19]
But, since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,
And that thy tongue some 'say[20] of breeding breathes,
What safe and nicely I might well delay[21]
By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn.
Back do I toss these treasons to thy head;
With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart;
Which — for they yet glance by, and scarcely bruise —
This sword of mine shall give them instant way,
Where they shall rest for ever.[22] — Trumpets, speak!

[*Alarums. They fight:* EDMUND *falls.*

Gon. O save him, save him! — This is practice,[23] Gloster:
By th' law of arms thou wast not bound to answer

[19] Because, if his adversary were not of equal rank, Edmund might decline the combat. See *King Richard II.*, page 123, note 5.

[20] "Some '*say*," that is, *assay*, is some *taste*, some *smack*.

[21] Meaning, no doubt, "What I might safely well delay if I acted *punctiliously*." Such is one of the old meanings of *nicely*. See page 107, note 23.

[22] *To the place* where they shall rest for ever; that is, in Edgar's heart.

[23] *Practice*, again, for *plot*, *stratagem*, *artifice*. See page 76, note 27. Other instances of the same have occurred in this play; such as "damnèd *practice*," and "he did bewray his *practice*."

An unknown opposite ; thou art not vanquish'd,
But cozen'd and beguiled.

Alb. Shut your mouth, dame,
Or with this paper shall I stop it. — [*To* EDGAR.] Hold, sir ! —
[*To* GON.] Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil :
No tearing, lady ; I perceive you know it.

Gon. Say, if I do ; the laws are mine, not thine :
Who can arraign me for't? [*Exit.*

Alb. Most monstrous ! — O,
Know'st thou this paper? [*Offers the letter to* EDMUND.

Edm. Ask me not what I know.[24]

Alb. Go after her : she's desperate ; govern her.
[*To an* Officer, *who goes out.*

Edm. [*To* EDGAR.] What you have charged me with, that have I done ;
And more, much more ; the time will bring it out :
'Tis past, and so am I. But what art thou
That hast this fortune on me? If thou'rt noble,
I do forgive thee.

Edg. Let's exchange charity.
I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund ;
If more, the more thou'st wrongèd me.
My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.
The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to plague us.

Edm. Thou'st spoken right, 'tis true ;
The wheel is come full circle ; I am here.

[24] Albany might well ask Edmund, "know'st thou this paper?" for, in fact, Goneril's letter did not reach Edmund ; he had not seen it. Edmund, with some spirit of manhood, refuses to make any answers that will criminate or blacken a woman by whom he is loved ; and then proceeds, consistently, to answer *Edgar's* charges.

Alb. Methought thy very gait did prophesy
A royal nobleness. I must embrace thee:
Let sorrow split my heart, if ever I
Did hate thee or thy father!

Edg. Worthy Prince,
I know't.

Alb. Where have you hid yourself?
How have you known the miseries of your father?

Edg. By nursing them, my lord. List a brief tale;
And, when 'tis told, O, that my heart would burst!
The bloody proclamation to escape,
That follow'd me so near, — O, our lives' sweetness!
That with the pain of death we'd hourly die[25]
Rather than die at once! — taught me to shift
Into a madman's rags; t' assume a semblance
That very dogs disdain'd: and in this habit
Met I my father with his bleeding rings,
Their precious stones new lost; became his guide,
Led him, begg'd for him, saved him from despair;
Never — O fault! — reveal'd myself unto him,
Until some half-hour past, when I was arm'd:
Not sure, though hoping, of this good success,[26]
I ask'd his blessing, and from first to last
Told him my pilgrimage; but his flaw'd heart,
Alack, too weak the conflict to support

[25] "To die hourly with the pain of death," is a periphrasis for to suffer hourly the pain of death.

[26] Here, as in many other places, *success* is *issue* or *result*. See page 75, note 21. — "This good success" refers to the combat with Edmund. Edgar, apprehensive that he might fall, had piously craved his father's benediction on the undertaking. So, in the long run, he who believes in the gods, and fears them, proves too much for the intellectual sceptic and scoffer.

'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
Burst smilingly.[27]

Edm. This speech of yours hath moved me,
And shall perchance do good: but speak you on;
You look as you had something more to say.

Alb. If there be more, more woeful, hold it in;
For I am almost ready to dissolve,
Hearing of this.

Edg. This would have seem'd a period
To such as love not sorrow; but another,
To amplify too-much, would make much more,
And top extremity.[28]

[27] Is it indeed the stars that govern our condition? Upon what theory shall we account for the sisterhood of a Goneril and a Cordelia? And why is it that Gloster, whose suffering is the retribution for past misdeeds, should be restored to spiritual calm and light, and should pass away in a rapture of mingled gladness and grief, while Lear, "a man more sinned against than sinning," should be robbed of the comfort of Cordelia's love, should be stretched, to the last moment, upon "the rack of this tough world," and should expire in the climax of a paroxysm of unproductive anguish? Shakespeare does not attempt to answer these questions. The impression which the facts themselves produce, their influence to "free, arouse, dilate," seems to Shakespeare more precious than any proposed explanation of the facts which cannot be verified. The heart is purified, not by dogma, but by pity and terror. — DOWDEN.

[28] This obscure passage has commonly been set down as corrupt, and I formerly thought it so myself; but I am now all but satisfied that it is quite sound. *To amplify* is another instance of the infinitive used gerundively, and is equivalent to *in* or *by amplifying*. See page 117, note 18. — The use of to *top* for to *surpass* is very frequent. See page 70, note 4. So that the sense of the text comes something thus: "To those who are not in love with sorrow, this tale which I have just told would seem to be enough, — seem to require a period, or full stop; but another *such tale added to this*, by amplifying what is already too much, by making that too-much still more, would pass beyond or overtop the utmost limit of distress." — This explanation was suggested to me by Mr. Crosby. *Another* has been mistaken to mean another *person*. The key to the right sense is in the gerundial infinitive.

Whilst I was big in clamour, came there a man
Who, having seen me in my worst estate,
Shunn'd my abhorr'd society; but then, finding
Who 'twas that so endured, with his strong arms
He fasten'd on my neck, and bellow'd out
As he'd burst heaven; threw him on my father;
Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him
That ever ear received; which in recounting,
His grief grew puissant, and the strings of life
Began to crack: twice then the trumpet sounded,
And there I left him tranced.

Alb. But who was this!

Edg. Kent, sir, the banish'd Kent; who in disguise
Follow'd his enemy King, and did him service
Improper for a slave.

Enter a Gentleman *hastily, with a bloody knife.*

Gent. Help, help, O, help!

Edg. What kind of help?

Alb. Speak, man.

Edg. What means that bloody knife?

Gent. 'Tis hot, it smokes;
It came even from the heart of — O, she's dead!

Alb. Who dead? speak, man.

Gent. Your lady, sir, your lady: and her sister
By her is poisonéd; she hath confess'd it.

Edm. I was contracted to them both: all three
Now marry in an instant.

Edg. Here comes Kent.

Alb. Produce their bodies, be they alive or dead: —
This judgment of the Heavens, that makes us tremble,
Touches us not with pity. [*Exit* Gentleman.

Enter KENT.

O, is this he?
The time will not allow the compliment
Which very manners urges.[29]
Kent. I am come
To bid my King and master aye good night:
Is he not here?
Alb. Great thing of us forgot!—
Speak, Edmund, where's the King? and where's Cordelia?—
[*The bodies of* GON. *and* REG. *are brought in.*
Seest thou this object, Kent?
Kent. Alack, why thus?
Edm. Yet Edmund was beloved:
The one the other poison'd for my sake,
And after slew herself.
Alb. Even so.—Cover their faces.
Edm. I pant for life: some good I mean to do,
Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send—
Be brief[30] in't—to the castle; for my writ
Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia:
Nay, send in time.
Alb. Run, run, O, run!
Edg. To whom, my lord?—Who has the office? send
Thy token of reprieve.
Edm. Well thought on: take my sword, give it the captain.
Alb. Haste thee, for thy life. [*Exit* EDGAR.
Edm. He hath commission from thy wife and me
To hang Cordelia in the prison, and

[29] "There is no time now for the interchange of courtesies which mere good-breeding requires, to say nothing of old friendship and affection." The Poet often has *very* in the sense of *mere*. See *Hamlet*, page 192, note 14.

[30] *Brief* for *quick*. *Briefly* for *quickly* has occurred before.

To lay the blame upon her own despair,
That she fordid herself.[31]

Alb. The gods defend her! — Bear him hence awhile.

[EDMUND *is borne off.*

Enter LEAR, *with* CORDELIA *dead in his arms;* EDGAR, Officer, *and Others.*

Lear. Howl, howl, howl, howl! — O, you are men of stone!
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever!
I know when one is dead, and when one lives;
She's dead as earth. — Lend me a looking-glass:
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
Why, then she lives.

Kent. Is this the promised end?

Edg. Or image of that horror?[32]

Alb. Fall, and cease![33]

Lear. This feather stirs; she lives! if it be so,
It is a chance that does redeem all sorrows
That ever I have felt.

Kent. [*Kneeling.*] O my good master!

Lear. Pr'ythee, away.

Edg. 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

[31] To *fordo* signifies to *destroy*. See *Hamlet*, page 95, note 21.

[32] Kent, contemplating the scene before him, and the attempt of Goneril and Regan against their father's life, recollects those passages of St. Mark in which Christ foretells to His disciples *the end of the world*, and hence his question, "Is this the end of all things, which has been foretold to us?" To which Edgar adds, "Or only a representation of that horror?"

[33] To *cease* is to *die*. Albany, looking on the pains employed by Lear to recover Cordelia, and knowing to what miseries he must survive, when he finds them to be ineffectual, cries out, "Rather fall, and cease to be at once, than continue in existence only to be wretched."

Lear. A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!
I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever!—
Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!
What is't thou say'st?—Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle, and low,—an excellent thing in woman.—
I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.

Off. 'Tis true, my lords, he did.

Lear. Did I not, fellow?
I've seen the day, with my good biting falchion
I would have made them skip: I am old now,
And these same crosses spoil me.—Who are you?
Mine eyes are none o' the best: I'll tell you straight.

Kent. If Fortune brag of two she loved and hated,
One of them ye behold.[34]

Lear. 'Tis a dull light.[35] Are you not Kent?

Kent. The same,
Your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius?

Lear. He's a good fellow, I can tell you that;
He'll strike, and quickly too. He's dead and rotten.

Kent. No, my good lord, I am the very man,—

Lear. I'll see that straight.

Kent.—That, from the first of difference and decay,
Have follow'd your sad steps,—

Lear. You're welcome hither.

[34] This is said, apparently, in answer to Lear's question, "Who are you?" By *two*, Kent means, of course, himself and the King; by *one*, himself. In former days, Fortune had indeed seemed to love them both; but, of late, her persecutions have been as bitter as her smiles were sweet before.

[35] The old King is dying; and, as often happens on the approach of death, he mistakes the sudden dimming of his eyes for a defect of light. Goethe's last words are said to have been "More light!" In fact, hardly any thing is more common than for dying people to complain that it is growing dark; and physicians will tell us there is no worse sign than such a calling for light.

Kent. — Nor no man else. All's cheerless, dark, and deadly:
Your eldest daughters have fordone themselves,
And desperately are dead.

Lear. Ay, so I think.

Alb. He knows not what he says; and vain is it
That we present us to him.

Edg. Very bootless.

Enter an Officer.

Off. Edmund is dead, my lord.

Alb. That's but a trifle here. —
You lords and noble friends, know our intent.
What comfort to this great decay [36] may come
Shall be applied: for us, we will resign,
During the life of this old Majesty,
To him our absolute power. – [*To* EDGAR *and* KENT.] You, to your rights;
With boot, and such addition as your honours
Have more than merited. — All friends shall taste
The wages of their virtue, and all foes
The cup of their deservings. — O, see, see!

Lear. And my poor fool [37] is hang'd! No, no, no life!
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never! —

[36] "This *great decay*" is Lear. Shakespeare means the same as if he had said, "this piece of decayed royalty." Gloster calls him in a preceding scene "ruin'd piece of nature."

[37] *Poor fool* was often used as a strong expression of endearment. Here the words refer, not to the Fool, as some have supposed, but to Cordelia, on whose lips the old King is still intent, and dies while he is searching there for indications of life.

'Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir. —
Do you see this? Look on her, — look, — her lips, —
Look there, look there! [38] [*Dies.*

Edg. He faints! — My lord, my lord!

Kent. Break, heart; I pr'ythee, break!

Edg. Look up, my lord.

Kent. Vex not his ghost: O, let him pass! he hates him
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.

Edg. He is gone indeed.

Kent. The wonder is, he hath endured so long:
He but usurp'd his life.

Alb. Bear them from hence. — Our present business
Is general woe. — [*To* KENT *and* EDGAR.] Friends of my soul, you twain
Rule in this realm, and the gored State sustain.

Kent. I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;
My master calls me, I must not say no.

Alb. The weight of this sad time we must obey;

[38] But Lear himself, the central figure of the tragedy, what of him? What of suffering humanity that wanders from the darkness into light, and from the light into darkness? Lear is grandly passive, — played upon by all the manifold forces of nature and society. And — though he is in part delivered from his imperious self-will, and learns at last what true love is, and that it exists in the world — Lear passes away from our sight, not in any mood of resignation, or faith, or illuminated peace, but in a piteous agony of yearning for that love which he has found only to lose for ever. Does Shakespeare mean to contrast the pleasure in a demonstration of spurious affection in the first scene, with the agonized cry for real love in the last scene? and does he wish us to understand that the true gain from the bitter discipline of Lear's old age was precisely this, — his acquiring a supreme need of what is best, though a need which finds, so far as we can learn, no satisfaction? — We guess at the spiritual significance of the great tragic facts of the world, but, after our guessing, their mysteriousness remains. — DOWDEN.

Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath borne most: we that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

[*Exeunt, with a dead march.*

CRITICAL NOTES ON KING LEAR.

ACT I., SCENE I.

Page 59. **Now, our joy,**
Although our last, not least; to whose young love
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interess'd; &c. — So the folio, except that it has "Although our last *and* least." White prefers this reading, on the ground that Cordelia was literally the smallest of the three daughters; "that she was her father's little pet, while her sisters were big, bold, brazen beauties." He makes a good argument to the point, so that I find it not easy to choose; but the phrase "though last, not least" appears to have been something of a favourite with the Poet. The quartos give the passage thus: —

> Although *the* last, *not* least in our deere love,
> What can you say to *win* a third, more opulent
> Than your sisters?

P. 60. **For, by the sacred radiance of the Sun,**
The mysteries of Hecate and the night; &c. — So the second folio. Instead of *mysteries*, the quartos have *mistresse;* the first folio, *miseries*.

P. 61. **Peace, Kent!**
Come not between the dragon and his wrath:
I loved her most, and thought to set my rest
On her kind nursery: hence, and avoid my sight. — It is somewhat in question whether the words "hence, and avoid my sight!"

are addressed to Kent or to Cordelia. But, surely, if they were spoken to Cordelia, she would not remain in presence, as she does. Moreover, as Heath observes, "in the next words Lear sends for France and Burgundy, in order to tender them his youngest daughter, if either of them would accept her without a dowry. At such a time, therefore, to drive her out of his presence would be a contradiction to his declared intention." On the other hand, it is urged that Kent has said nothing to provoke so harsh a sentence. It is true, Kent has but started in his remonstrance; but Lear is supposed to know his bold and ardent temper; and he might well anticipate what presently comes from him.

P. 62. **Reverse thy doom,**
And in thy best consideration check
This hideous rashness. — So the quartos. The folio has "*reserve thy state.*" The former is more in harmony with the context.

P. 63. **Five days we do allot thee, for provision**
To shield thee from diseases of the world;
And, on the sixth, to turn thy hated back
Upon our kingdom: if, on the tenth day following,
Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,
The moment is thy death. — In the second of these lines the folio has *disasters* instead of *diseases*, which is the reading of the quartos. As Malone observes, "diseases, in old language, meant the slighter *inconveniences*, *troubles*, and *distresses* of the world. The provision that Kent could make in five days might in some measure guard him against the *diseases* of the world, but could not shield him from its *disasters*." — In the fourth line, Collier's second folio substitutes *seventh* for *tenth*. The change is plausible; but, as Mr. Crosby writes me, "the King orders Kent on the sixth day to turn his hated back, and *start;* and, as we can hardly suppose the King's palace, or Kent's, to be on the edge of the kingdom, he gives him *three days* to get out of 'our dominions': so that on the *tenth* he shall have crossed the line."

P. 64. *Lear.* **Right-noble Burgundy,**
When she was dear to us, we did hold her so;
But now her price is fall'n. — In the second of these lines

the little word *did* is decidedly in the way; and I suspect it ought to be got rid of by printing "we *held* her so."

P. 65. **The argument of your praise, balm of your age,**
The best, the dearest, &c. — So the folio. The quartos have "*Most* best, *most* dearest." Shakespeare, it is true, often doubles the superlatives, as in *most best;* still I think the folio reading preferable.

P. 66. **It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,**
No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step,
That hath deprived me of your grace and favour;
But even the want of that for which I'm richer, &c. — In the first of these lines, Collier's second folio reads "no vicious blot, *nor other* foulness." It does indeed seem rather strange that Cordelia should use the word *murder* here: but she may well see reason for it in the harsh language that has just been used both by her father and by the King of France. So I have hardly any doubt the Poet wrote as in the text. — In the fourth line, the old copies read "But even *for* want"; *for* having probably been repeated by mistake. Corrected by Hanmer.

P. 67. **Ye jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes**
Cordelia leaves you. — The old copies have "*The* jewels." The same misprint occurs repeatedly, the old contractions of *ye* and *the* being very easily confounded. Here, as elsewhere, the context readily detects the error.

P. 68. **Who cover faults, at last shame them derides.** — So the quartos, except that they have *covers*. The folio reads "at last *with* shame derides."

ACT I., SCENE II.

P. 70. **Edmund the base**
Shall top th' legitimate. — Instead of *top th'*, the quartos have *tooth'*, the folio, *to'th'*. Corrected by Capell.

ACT I., SCENE III.

P. 77. **Now, by my life,**
Old fools are babes again, and must be used
With checks, when flatteries are seen abused. — Not in the folio. The quartos read "with checkes as flatteries when they are seen abus'd." As it is hardly possible to strain any fitting sense out of this, various changes have been made or proposed. Warburton reads "With checks, *not* flatt'ries," and Jennens, "With checks, *by* flatteries when *they're* seen abused." As the lines ending with *used* and *abused* were obviously meant for a rhyming couplet, they should properly both be pentameters, whereas the old text makes the second an Alexandrine. By transposing *when*, and omitting *as* and *they*, we get both sense and metre right. Probably the Poet's first writing and his subsequent correction got jumbled together in the printing.

P. 84. **Come place him here by me,**
Or do thou for him stand. — In the second of these lines, *Or*, needful alike to sense and to metre, is wanting in the old text.

P. 84. **No, faith, lords and great men will not let me; if I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't: and ladies too, they will not let me have all fool to myself.** — This passage is not in the folio, and the quartos have *loades* and *lodes* instead of *ladies*. Some very ludicrous contortions of argument have been put forth, to sustain the old reading.

P. 86. **The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,**
That it had its head bit off by its young. — Instead of *its*, the old copies here have *it* in both places. Of course this is an instance of *it* used possessively. The Cambridge Editors print "had *it* head bit off by *it* young"; though in various other cases they change *it* to *its*. It may be worth the while to observe that the Bible of 1611 has one instance of *it* used in the same way; yet all modern editions, so far as I know, substitute *its*. See *Hamlet*, page 235.

P. 88. **This admiration, sir, is much o' the savour**
Of other your new pranks. — One of the quartos and the folio have *savour;* the other quarto has *favour*. Either word suits the place well enough; and modern editors differ in their readings.

P. 89. **And in the most exact regard support**
The worship of their name. — The old copies have "The *worships* of their name." According to old usage, both *worship* and *name* should be plural, or neither.

P. 92. **And thereto add such reasons of your own**
As may compact it more. So get you gone,
And hasten your return. — The old copies lack *So,* which was inserted by Pope.

P. 92. **This milky course and gentleness of yours,**
Though I condemn it not, yet, under pardon, &c. — So Pope. The old copies lack *it,* which is needful alike to sense and to metre.

ACT I., SCENE V.

P. 93. **If a man's brains were in's heels, were't not in danger of kibes?** — Pope changed *brains* to *brain,* and so Walker would read. But is not *brains* sometimes used as a noun singular?

ACT II., SCENE I.

P. 97. **But that I told him the revenging gods**
'Gainst parricides did all their thunders bend. — So the quartos. The folio reads "did all *the thunder* bend"; which some editors prefer: but, surely, a very inferior reading.

P. 100. **Yes, madam, he was of that consort.** — Collier's second folio reads "Yes, madam, *yes,* he was of that consort." Dyce proposes "he was *one* of that consort." I suspect that one of these insertions ought to be admitted.

P. 100. **'Tis they have put him on the old man's death,**
To have the waste and spoil of his revenues. — So the quartos. The folio reads "*th' expence* and *wast* of his Revenues."

ACT II., SCENE II.

P. 102. **If I had thee in Finsbury pinfold, I would make thee care for me.** — So Collier's second folio. The old text has *Lipsbury* instead of *Finsbury*. Jennens conjectured *Ledbury*. As there is no such place in England as Lipsbury, that name can hardly be right. *Finsbury* was the name of a place near London ; and it is mentioned in *1 King Henry the Fourth*, iii. 1. It has been urged, however, that, if *lipsbury* was not a phrase well known in Shakespeare's time, to imply *gagging*, he may have coined it for that purpose ; and that Kent's meaning may be, "where the movement of thy lips should be of no avail." So "Lipsbury pinfold" would mean a place where neither Oswald's *legs* nor his *lips* could help him, — where he could not run away, nor could his whining nor his yelling for help do him any good. But all this seems to me forced and far-fetched. Surely no theatrical audience would have understood the phrase.

P. 103. *Edm.* **How now! What's the matter?** [*Parting them.*
Kent. **With you, goodman boy, if you please.** — The folio reads "What's the matter? Part." Here *Part* was no doubt meant as a stage-direction, but got printed as being of the text. Such errors are quite frequent. The quartos agree with the folio, except that they lack *Part*.

P. 105. **Reneag, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks**
With every gale and vary of their masters,
As knowing nought, like dogs, but following. — So Pope. The old text is without *As* in the last line. Surely the Poet could not have intended such a halt in the metre.

P. 108. **Your purposed low correction**
Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches, &c. — This is not in the folio; and the quartos have *temnest* instead of *contemned'st*. The correction is Capell's.

P. 110. **I know 'tis from Cordelia,**
Who hath most fortunately been inform'd
Of my obscurèd course; and shall find time,
From this enormous state, seeking, to give
Losses their remedies. — Much question has been made as to how this difficult passage ought to be printed; and some editors print the words, "and shall find time, from this enormous state, seeking, to give losses their remedies," as if Kent were reading them, disjointedly, from Cordelia's letter. But it appears that there is not light enough for this; and Kent longs to have the dawn come, that he may see to read the letter. As the text is here printed, *shall find* is in the same construction with *know*, — "I know, and I shall find." See foot-note 31.

ACT II., SCENE IV.

P. 126. **But, for true need, —**
You Heavens, give me patience, — patience I need! — The old text reads "You Heavens, give me *that* patience, patience I need"; which is only an intense way of saying, "that patience which I need"; whereas the right sense, it seems to me, is, "give me patience, that is what I need." The passage has caused a deal of comment, and several changes have been proposed. Mr. White and some others omit the second *patience;* which is a greater change than I make, while it seems to miss the right sense. Walker would read, "You Heavens, give me patience! — *that* I need," according to Ritson's suggestion.

ACT III., SCENE I.

P. 128. **Sir, I do know you;**
And dare, upon the warrant of my note,
Commend a dear thing to you. — So the folio. The quartos read "upon the warrant of my *arte*." Some editors prefer the quarto reading, explaining it "my skill to *find the mind's construction in the face*." But it appears that Kent "*knows* his man," and therefore has no occasion to use the *skill* in question. See foot-note 3.

P. 129. **Who have — as who have not, that their great stars**
Throne and set high? — servants, who seem no less,
Which are to France the spies and speculators
Intelligent of our State. — Not in the quartos. The folio, in the second line, has *Thron'd* instead of *Throne*. Corrected by Theobald. Also, in the third line, the folio has *speculations*. Johnson thought it should be *speculators*, and Singer's second folio has it so. As the word evidently refers to *persons*, can there be any doubt about it?

ACT III., SCENE II.

P. 132. **That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads.** — So one of the quartos, spelling the word *powther;* the other has *Thundring*. The folio has *pudder*.

P. 132. **Thou perjured, and thou simular of virtue**
That art incestuous. — So the folio. The quartos have "thou simular *man* of virtue." See foot-note 8.

P. 134. **This is a brave night. I'll speak a prophesy ere I go.** — This, and what follows down to the end of the scene, is not in the quartos. Mr. Grant White regards the whole as an interpolation. "This loving, faithful creature," says he, "would not let his old master go off half-crazed into that storm, that he might stop, and utter such pointless and uncalled-for imitation of Chaucer." In this opinion I fully concur. For the whole passage, besides being a stark impertinence dramatically, is as unlike Shakespeare as it is unlike the Fool; unlike Shakespeare, I mean, in poetical texture and grain.

ACT III., SCENE IV.

P. 139. **Take heed o' the foul fiend: obey thy parents; keep thy word justly.** — The quartos read "keepe thy *words* justly"; the folio, "keep thy words *Justice*." The second folio changes *words* to *word*.

P. 141. **Saint Withold footed thrice the 'old,** &c. — So Theobald, and so the metre evidently requires. Instead of *Saint Withold*, the old

text has *swithold* and *Swithold*. *S.* is the old abbreviation for *saint*, and the Poet probably wrote *S. Withold*.

ACT III., SCENE VI.

P. 146. **He's mad that trusts in the tameness of a wolf, a horse's health, a boy's love,** &c. — So all the old editions. Several commentators are very positive it should be "a horse's *heels*"; there being an old proverb in Ray's *Collection*, "Trust not in a horse's heels, nor a dog's tooth." But men that way skilled know it is about as unsafe to trust in the soundness of a horse as in the other things mentioned by the Fool.

P. 146. **Come, sit thou here, most learnèd justicer.** — The quartos have *justice* instead of *justicer*. Further on, however, they have *justicer*. — This part of the scene, beginning with "The foul fiend bites my back," down to "Bless thy five wits," is wanting in the folio.

P. 146. **Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me.** — The quartos have *broome* instead of *bourn*. Not in the folio.

P. 149. **Hound or spaniel, brach or lym.** — The old copies have *Him* and *Hym* instead of *lym*. Corrected by Hanmer.

P. 150. **This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken senses,**
Which, if convenience will not allow,
Stand in hard cure. — So Theobald. The speech is not in the folio; and the quartos have *sinews* instead of *senses*. White, Dyce, and the Cambridge Editors retain *sinews*. But, surely, *senses* is right. And the same speaker has said, a little before, "All the power of his *wits have given way* to his impatience." And again, — "his *wits* are gone." Can there be any doubt that he means the same thing here? Moreover, Lear has no broken *sinews*; he is out of his senses; that is, his *wits* are broken. Besides, sleep does not heal broken sinews; but it has great healing efficacy upon such "perturbations of the brain" as the poor old King is racked with. So in *Macbeth*, ii. 1: "Innocent sleep, *balm of hurt minds*."

P. 151. **When false opinion, whose wrong thought defiles thee,**
In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee. — So Theobald. This speech is not in the folio ; and the quartos have *thoughts defile*. But a rhyme was probably intended. — It may be well to add Heath's explanation of the passage: "Observe the event of those disturbances that are now on foot, and discover thyself when the present false opinion entertained of thee, which stains thy reputation with a crime of which thou art innocent, being convicted by thy full proof, repeals thy present banishment from society, and reconciles thee to thy father." Of the whole speech I can but say that I do not believe Shakespeare wrote a word of it. The workmanship, in all points, smacks of a very different hand. The Cambridge Editors note upon it, "internal evidence is conclusive against the supposition that the lines were written by Shakespeare."

ACT III., SCENE VII.

P. 155. **My lord, you have one eye left**
To see some mischief on them. — The old copies have *him* instead of *them*. But, as Dyce says, "the Servant is evidently speaking of Cornwall *and Regan*." The pronouns *him* and *them* or *'em* are often confounded.

ACT IV., SCENE I.

P. 157. **Yet better thus, unknown, to be contemn'd,**
Than still contemn'd and flatter'd. — So Collier's second folio ; as Johnson had conjectured, and Tyrwhitt and Malone approved. The old copies read "Yet better thus, *and knowne* to be contemn'd."

P. 158. **Full oft 'tis seen,**
Our maims secure us, and our mere defects
Prove our commodities. — Instead of *maims*, the old copies have *means;* which may possibly be explained somewhat thus: "The having what we desire makes us reckless, while privation or adversity sobers us." This takes *secure* in the sense of the Latin *securus*, *negligent* or *presumptuous*. But this, to say the least, seems a harsh and strained interpretation. Pope reads "Our *mean secures* us." Collier's

second folio substitutes *wants* for *means*, and Singer proposes *needs*. Walker says, "There can be no doubt that Johnson's *mains* is the right reading." See foot-note 6.

P. 160. **Five fiends have been in poor Tom at once; as Obidicut, of lust; Hobbididance, prince of dumbness;** &c. — So Walker. The old text has an awkward inversion, — *of lust, as Obidicut.* The passage is not in the folio.

ACT IV., SCENE II.

P. 164. **If that the Heavens do not their visible spirits**
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,
It will come, &c. — This speech is not in the folio; and the quartos have *the* and *this* instead of *these*. The limiting force of the demonstrative is clearly required by the context.

P. 164. **France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,**
With plumèd helm thy state begins to threat; &c. — The old copies have "thy *slayer begin threats*," "thy *slaier* begins *threats*," and "thy *state* begins *thereat*." The reading in the text was proposed by Eccles, and adopted by Staunton and the Cambridge Editors.

P. 165. **Thou changèd and sex-cover'd thing, for shame,**
Be-monster not thy feature! — The old text has "*selfe-cover'd* thing," out of which it is hardly possible to extract any fitting sense. Theobald reads "Thou *chang'd* and *self-converted* thing"; which does not really better the passage at all. Other readings have been proposed, as "*chang'd* and self-*discover'd*," and "*chang'd* and self-*uncover'd*." The emendation here adopted (and I deem it of the first class) was proposed to me by Mr. Joseph Crosby. See foot-note 13.

P. 165. **Marry, your manhood mew.** — So corrected copies of the second quarto, and the Cambridge edition. The other old copies have *now* instead of *mew*. See foot-note 16.

ACT IV., SCENE III.

This scene is wanting altogether in the folio. As it is, both poetically and physiognomically, one of the best in the play, the purpose of the omission could hardly have been other than to shorten the time of representation; which would infer the folio to have been printed from a stage copy.

P. 167. **Ay, sir; she took them, read them in my presence;** &c. — So Theobald. The old copies have "*I say* she." The affirmative *ay* was very often printed *I*.

P. 167.

You have seen
Sunshine and rain at once; her smiles and tears
Were like: a better way, — those happy smilets, &c. — Such, literally, is the reading of all the quartos; which has been unnecessarily and dangerously tampered with and tinkered in most of modern editions; some reading "like a better *May*"; some, "like a *wetter May*"; and some, "like a better *day*." But the old reading is assuredly right. The sense is clearly completed at *like*, and should there be cut off from what follows, as it is in the text: "You have seen sunshine and rain at once; her smiles and tears were like"; that is, were like "sunshine and rain at once." Then begins another thought, or another mode of illustration: "To speak it in a better way, those happy smilets," &c. And I insist upon it that the passage so read is better poetry, as well as better sense and better logic, than with *way* turned into *day* or *May*, and made an adjunct or tag to *like*. The pointing here given was suggested by Boaden.

P. 168.

In brief, sir, sorrow
Would be a rarity most beloved, if all, &c. — So Capell and Walker. The old text is without *sir*.

P. 168.

There she shook
The holy water from her heavenly eyes,
And, clamour-moisten'd, then away she started
To deal with grief alone. — So White. The old copies read

"And clamour moistened *her*"; *her* having probably been repeated by mistake from the line above. Theobald reads "And, clamour-*moiten'd*, then away she started." The more common reading is "And clamour moisten'd: then away," &c.

ACT IV., SCENE IV.

P. 169. **Crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds,**
With burdocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers, &c. — In the first of these lines, the quartos have *femiter*, the folio *Femitar*, instead of *fumiter*. In the second line, the quartos have, instead of *burdocks*, *hoar-docks*, and *hor-docks*; the folio, *Hardokes*. The correction is Hanmer's. Heath says, "I believe we should read *burdocks*, which frequently grow among corn."

P. 170. **'Tis known before; our preparation stands**
In expectation of them. — O dear father,
It is thy business that I go about;
Therefore great France
My mourning and important tears have pitied.
No blown ambition doth our arms incite,
But love, dear love, and our aged father's right:
Soon may I hear and see him! — In this speech, again, all after "expectation of them" is, I am sure, an interpolation by some other hand. It has not the flavour either of Shakespeare or of Cordelia.

ACT IV., SCENE VI.

P. 173. **The murmuring surge,**
That on th' unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes,
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more;
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong. — So Pope. The quartos have "idle peebles *chafe*"; the folio, "idle *pebble* chafes." — In the fourth line, Mr. Daniel Jefferson, of Boston, suggests to me that we ought to read "and *through* deficient sight." As the Poet may well have written

thro, and as this might easily be mistaken for *the*, I suspect Mr. Jefferson is right.

P. 175. **Ten masts at each make not the altitude**, &c. — The phrase *at each* has troubled the editors, and various changes have been made or proposed, most of them not worth specifying. Pope reads "Ten masts *attacht*"; which seems to me the best of them, except, perhaps, *a-stretcht*, proposed by Jennens. See foot-note 7.

P. 178. **To say ay and no to every thing that I said ay and no to was no good divinity.** — The old copies differ in the pointing of this passage; but such is the literal reading, except that they have *toe* and *too* instead of the last *to*. But we have many instances of *too* and *to* confounded. The passage is commonly printed thus: "To say *ay* and *no* to every thing that I said! — *Ay* and *no* too was no good divinity." This may have a meaning, but I have tried in vain to understand it. See foot-note 15.

P. 179. **Were all the letters suns, I could not see.** — So the folio, except that it has "*thy* Letters." The quartos read "I could not see *one*"; which I cannot well understand how anybody should prefer. The quartos have "*the* letters."

P. 180. **Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear.** — The quartos read "through tattered *ragges* small vices"; the folio, "thorough tatter'd cloathes *great* vices."

P. 180. **Plate sin with gold,**
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks. — This is not in the quartos; and the folio has *Place sinnes*. Corrected by Pope.

P. 180. **When we are born, we cry that we are come**
To this great stage of fools. — **'Tis a good block:** &c. — So Ritson. The old copies have "*This* a good blocke." See foot-note 24.

P. 181. **Let me have a surgeon;**
I'm cut to th' brains. — The quartos read "Let me have a *chirurgeon*"; such being the old form of *surgeon*; the folio, "Let me have *Surgeons*."

P. 181. **To use his eyes for garden water-pots,**
Ay, and for laying Autumn's dust. — So the quartos, except that they lack *for* in the second line. The folio here gives a somewhat different text, thus: —

> To use his eyes for Garden water-pots. I wil die bravely,
> Like a smugge Bridegroome. What? I will be Joviall:
> Come, come, I am a King, Masters, know you that?

P. 183. **A most poor man, made tame to fortune's blows.** — So the folio. The quartos read "made *lame by* fortunes blowes."

P. 184. **Seek him out**
Upon the English party: — O, untimely death! — The old editions repeat *death*.

P. 185. **O undistinguish'd space of woman's will!** — The quartos have *wit* instead of *will*, the folio reading; while the folio has *indistinguish'd*. See foot-note 39.

ACT IV., SCENE VII.

P. 186. **Yet to be known shortens my made intent.** — This sounds to us rather odd, and indeed hardly English, though it may be justified by the usage of the Poet's time, so far as regards the language, on the ground of its meaning "the intention which I have *formed*." But such, it seems to me, is not the right sense. Kent's thought appears to be, that the being now known will cause him to fall short, not of his whole purpose, but of what he regards as the more important part of it, namely, a full restoration of things to the state they were in at the opening of the play; and he might naturally think that he could work better to this end by keeping up his disguise awhile longer. So that I am all but satisfied we ought to read "my *main* intent," as in Collier's second folio.

P. 187. *Gent.* **Ay, madam; in the heaviness of his sleep**
We put fresh garments on him.
Doct. **Be by, good madam, when we do awake him:**
I doubt not of his temperance. — Such is the usual assign-

ment of these speeches, and it is clearly right. To the first of them one quarto prefixes "*Doct.*," and to the second "*Kent.*" The other quarto prefixes "*Doct.*" to the first, and "*Gent.*" to the second. The folio runs both speeches into one, and prefixes "*Gent.*"

P. 187. **O my dear father, restoration hang**
Thy medicine on my lips! — Such is the reading of all the old copies; and I like it the better that it makes *Thy* refer to *father*. Modern editions generally print "O my dear father! Restoration, hang," &c.; which makes *Thy* refer to *Restoration*. See foot-note 6.

P. 189. **I am a very foolish fond old man,**
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less; &c. — The words "not an hour more nor less" are found only in the folio. Some editors have rejected them as a probable interpolation, because of their being nonsensical. The nonsense of them, indicating, as it does, some remains of Lear's disorder, is the very reason why they should be retained.

P. 190. **Be comforted, good madam: the great rage,**
You see, is cured in him. — So the quartos. Instead of *cured*, the folio has *kill'd*, which some editors prefer, — rather strangely, I think. Collier conjectured *quell'd*. But what need of any thing better than *cured?*

ACT V., SCENE III.

P. 195. **For thee, oppressèd King, am I cast down;**
Myself could else out-frown false Fortune's frown. — Another interpolation, I have scarce any doubt. It is not rightly in character for Cordelia to be prating thus of the self-sacrifices she is making. The rhyme too is out of place. Read the speech without the couplet, and see how much better and truer it is.

P. 199. **Dispose of them, of me; yea, all is thine.** — This is not in the quartos; and the first folio reads "*the walls* is thine." Hanmer prints "*they all are* thine." The reading in the text is Lettsom's. The common reading is, "the walls *are* thine"; and the common explana-

tion tells us it is a metaphor taken from the camp, and means "to surrender at discretion."

P. 201. **Yet am I noble as the adversary**
I come to cope. — So the folio. The quartos have "I come to cope *withal*." The addition is needless, to say the least, as the Poet elsewhere uses *cope* as a transitive verb.

P. 201. **Behold, it is the privilege of mine honours,**
My oath, and my profession: &c. — The quartos read "it is the privilege of *my tongue*"; the folio, "it is *my privilege*, The privilege of mine honours," &c. The latter reading probably arose from an error and the correction of it being printed together.

P. 202. *Gon.* **O, save him, save him! — This is practice, Gloster:** &c. — So Theobald. The old copies are without *O*, and assign "Save him, save him!" to Albany. Theobald notes, "'Tis absurd that Albany, who knows of Edmund's treason, and of his own wife's passion for him, should be solicitous to have his life saved." I may add that Albany has most evidently been wishing that Edmund might fall in the combat. Walker says, "Theobald was right in giving the words '*O*, save him, save him,' (as he properly read) to Goneril."

P. 203. *Alb.* **Shut your mouth, dame,**
Or with this paper shall I stop it. — [*To* EDGAR.] Hold, sir. —
[*To* GON.] Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil:
No tearing, lady; I perceive you know it.
Gon. **Say, if I do; the laws are mine, not thine:**
Who can arraign me for't? [*Exit.*
Alb. **Most monstrous! — O,**
Know'st thou this paper? [*Offers the letter to* EDMUND.
Edm. **Ask me not what I know.**
Alb. **Go after her: she's desperate; govern her.**
[*To an* Officer, *who goes out.*
Edm. [*To* EDGAR.] **What you have charged me with,** &c. — I here follow the order and distribution of the speeches as given

in the folio. The quartos keep Goneril on the stage till after the speech, "Ask me not what I know," which they assign to her. According to this arrangement, the words, "Thou worse than any name," &c., are addressed to Edmund: but I hardly think Albany would say to him "read thine own evil," when that evil was properly Goneril's. Moreover, this arrangement supposes the words, "Know'st thou this paper?" to be addressed to Goneril. But it does not seem likely that Albany would ask her such a question; for he knows the letter to be her writing: besides, he has just said to her, "I perceive you know it." Of course I take the words "Hold, sir," as a request or an order to Edgar to abstain from further action against Edmund; and such, I think, is the natural sense of them. See foot-note 24.

P. 203. *Edg.* **Let's exchange charity.**
I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;
If more, the more thou'st wrongèd me. — The old text prints the last of these lines thus: "If more, the more *th' hast wrong'd* me." Here *th' hast* is the old contraction of *thou hast*. The line is commonly printed "If more, the more *thou hast wrong'd* me." Here the line, besides being short by one foot, is utterly unrhythmical, insomuch that it cannot be pronounced as metre at all. In the text, the line is made rhythmical, though still one foot short. Perhaps it should be "If more, the more, *then*, thou *hast* wrongèd me." Or, possibly, "the *worser* thou hast wrongèd me."

P. 204. **O, our lives' sweetness!**
That with the pain of death we'd hourly die
Rather than die at once! — The quartos read "That with the pain of death *would* hourly die"; the folio, "That *we* the pain of death *would* hourly dye." The reading in the text is Malone's.

P. 206. **Whilst I was big in clamour, came there a man**
Who, having seen me in my worst estate, &c. — This speech is not in the folio; and the quartos read "came there *in* a man"; *in* being probably repeated by mistake.

P. 206. **He fasten'd on my neck, and bellow'd out**
As he'd burst heaven; threw him on my father. — The

quartos have "threw *me* on my father." An obvious error, corrected by Theobald.

P. 208. **Howl, howl, howl, howl! — O, you are men of stone:** &c. — The old editions have "men of *stones*." Pope's correction.

P. 209. **'Tis a dull light. Are you not Kent?** — The folio reads "*This is* a dull *sight*." The words are not in the quartos. It does not well appear what *sight* can refer to here. And the question, "are you not Kent?" naturally infers that Lear thinks the *light* is growing *dim*. The long *s* and *l* were apt to be confounded. The change is from Collier's second folio. — Both sense and metre are against the reading *This is*. — See foot-note 35.